THE

HISTORY

OF

TOM RIGBY.

VOL. I.

TOM BIGBY.

OR

HISTORY

OF

1607/4338.

THE

HISTORY

Kath. Hussey

OF

TOM RIGBY.

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Lent by John Chater

DUBLIN:

Printed by A. MITCHELL, for the
BOOKSELLERS.

MDCCLXXXIII.

102 [CHATER, John]: The History of Tom Rigby. *Dublin: printed by A. Mitchel* 1773. *Two volumes.* 12*mo, contemporary calf.* First Irish edition. £60·00

An uncommon and very well written novel.

THE HISTORY OF TOM RIGBY.

BOOK I.

ON the western border of Northamptonshire, and on one of the most beautiful spots of rising land throughout the county, is situated the elegant mansion of the Earl of L———.

It was first erected by his grandfather; altered and improved at prodigious expence by his father; and dignified by the residence of every polite virtue in the son and his amiable family.

But, gentle reader, notwithstanding the lively pleasure you would receive in reading the memoirs of this illustrious house, entering into the sentiments and conversations of people of such distinguished quality, and being also acquainted with the interesting movements of love in high life, it is not the presumptuous intention of these pages to attempt so exquisite a gratification for you. To much more

humble ſcenes will you be led, if not determined to return this volume, without reading it, to the ſhelf of oblivion—or to the circulating library, which can furniſh you with an hundred in its ſtead, full of ſplendor and affluence, pomp and parade.

Mr. John Wilkins occupied a neat farm houſe, at about two miles from the Earl's ſeat, which, as it happened to lie in the way, could not be paſſed without ſome ſhort notice of it. He was not entirely a tenant of his Lordſhip's, for he alſo held ſome lands too of a neighbouring 'Squire; beſides enjoying a little freehold of his own, on which his houſe ſtood, the ſmall inheritance bequeathed him by his father.

He had been five years in poſſeſſion of it, having lived ſingle till his eight and twentieth year the period of his life at which this hiſtory commences—When calling in one day upon the widow Rigby, as he was paſſing by her houſe, he was ſmitten to the heart by a pair of lovely eyes, which belonged to a modeſt, decent young creature who was there on a viſit. If he was ſtruck with the agreeable perſon of the fair Alice Jetcombe, for ſo ſhe was called, he was yet more engaged by the ſenſible freedom of her converſation. He ſtaid with the widow three hours longer than he intended, and went away fully convinced that he could not live alone any longer with the leaſt convenience or happineſs. He went away, I ſay,—for his modeſty prevented him from making ſuch enquiries at that time, as might have afforded him the pleaſing opportunity of eſcorting the young Lady home.

No ſooner did he quit the houſe, than he began to revolve in his mind the diſagreeable way of life he had been in for five years paſt. For though he had an agreeable acquaintance among his neighbours, yet there was always a ſomething wanting at home; where, being rather of a ſober turn, the

chief

chief part of his time was ſpent. Now the imagination of having ſuch an agreeable young woman as Alice was, for a conſtant companion, had ſo occupied his mind, that he determined to viſit his good friend the widow again the next day, and get particular information concerning her.

The next morning he devoted the firſt hour that he could ſpare to this purpoſe. Mrs. Rigby gave him to underſtand, that the young Lady was the daughter of a clergyman that was dead, and had left her with a worthy, prudent mother and but a very ſlender ſubſiſtance. That on her mother's death, about three years ago, ſhe had got a recommendation to the family of the Earl of L———, as an attendant to his eldeſt daughter;——but being obliged to ſpend the winter in London, which either from its air or its irregularities did not agree with her health; ſhe relinquiſhed this ſtation, and was received into the family of 'Squire Turnbull, to wait on his Lady.—This account was very pleaſing to Mr. Wilkins; only he had no good opinion of Mr Turnbull's morals, and had ſome fears which he could hardly venture to ſuggeſt to Mrs Rigby, but which ſhe prevented by praiſing the recluſe and confined ſituation in which Alice lived with her lady. Indeed her principles as well as a conſtant attendance on Mrs Turnbull, contributed to preſerve her from the attacks of the 'Squire; who at forty years of age had very ſtrong affections towards every handſome young woman in the pariſh.

It was a favourable circumſtance to the farmer, that the girl on whom he had fixed his firſt affections was tolerably well qualified to make him a uſeful wife, and had beſides, about two hundred pounds left her by her mother, who had taken the utmoſt pains to qualify her for ſuch ſtation as her circumſtances would probably bring her into. Theſe latter particulars were very acceptable to Wilkins: and

the ſmallneſs of her fortune did not in the leaſt affect him, or raiſe any prudential ſcruple in him.

This inſenſibility to things of the firſt importance to others, proceeded from a ſingularity in his temper. Though he was a judicious and prudent man in the management of his buſineſs, yet he had an unuſual indifference about money, that few farmers had before him, and perhaps none ſince: and was accuſtomed to look no further into futurity than was conſiſtent with a peaceful enjoyment of the preſent neceſſaries of life.

This peculiar turn of mind might probably be owing to his diſpoſition in o her reſpects: for as he had a greater fondneſs for books than is uſual among farmers; he had in the many leiſure hours of his occupation, cultivated an acquaintance with ſeveral of the ſciences; was of a philoſophical turn of mind; and among his other ſtudies had actually read the Bible twice through: from which ſome of our readers might conclude him a methodiſt, if we did not aſſure them of the contrary.

Having received from Mrs. Rigby all the information he wanted, he returned home, his heart elated with pleaſing imaginations; and he reſolved to improve the firſt opportunity of getting to the ſpeech of Alice Jetcombe, and offer her his hand and heart.

Mrs. Turnbull being on a viſit ſome miles diſtant from home, had given Alice the enjoyment of an afternoon in her own way. She determined therefore to ſpend it with the widow Rigby, and was on her way thither, when farmer Wilkins met her, as he was going very reſolutely to the 'Squire's houſe, on purpoſe to introduce himſelf, if poſſible, to the fair object of his affection. This unexpected meeting, at ſo critical a time, at firſt diſconcerted Mr. Wilkins not a little: he could not now go forward to the 'Squire; and yet his modeſty wanted a fa-

vourable excuſe to turn back and accompany his miſtreſs. At the inſtant of deliberation, a friendly bull in the adjoining field, whether ſeized with ſympathetic compaſſion for the farmer's caſe, or perplexed, perhaps, himſelf, with ſome of thoſe vexatious obſtacles that cruelly retard the happineſs of lovers, preſented himſelf on the ſummit of a bank; and roaring hideouſly, was aiming to make his paſſage over a ditch before him. As Alice was not wholly free from ſome of the leſs unreaſonable fears of her ſex, ſhe readily ſought Mr. Wilkins's protection; who with the utmoſt chearfulneſs accompanied her through two fields on her way; aſſuring her it would hardly be ſafe for her to go alone. She made many apologies to him for taking him ſo much out of his way, and preſſed him to return, as ſhe was out of danger: but at the ſame time ſhewed a tender regard for his ſafety as well as her own, by perſuading him to take a different road back. He had no fear but of being obliged to quit her company, and having learned where ſhe was going, inſiſted on attending her the other half mile for fear of accidents. It was a favourable ſeaſon: yet it was with ſome heſitation that he began to open his heart to the liſtening confuſed maid, who, at firſt thought it only the effects of common gallantry. But ſhe ſoon underſtood by the propoſals Mr. Wilkins made, and the ſerioufneſs of his addreſs, that he had plain downright intentions of marrying her if ſhe would have him. Theſe were far from being diſagreeable to Alice, who knew ſomething of the farmer's reputation, as a ſenſible, generous, and thriving man, and ſaw him in a very agreeable figure. But it was neceſſary even for honeſt virtue to be reſerved at the firſt onſet.

"I wonder greatly, Mr. Wilkins, that ſuch a "thought could ever enter your head;—you muſt "think I ſhould make but a poor wife in a farm

" houſe : and ſurely you cannot be in earneſt." He ſaid all he could to aſſure her he was ; and that he had no doubt of rendering ſuch a ſtation very agreeable to her, if ſhe would condeſcend to accept of it.

In ſhort, Alice in an oblique manner removed her own objections, by acknowledging that ſhe had indeed ſpent ſome few years of her life in a dairy, as her father managed a little farm of his own, and ſhe was the ſuperintendant of all the buſineſs within doors till his death.

This intereſting converſation brought them very ſoon within ſight of the widow's houſe : and the farmer had gained confidence enough to propoſe joining with his fair companion in her viſit ; as he was well acquainted with Mrs. Rigby. But Alice begged of him to return, and by no means hinder, on her account, the buſineſs he was going on, when they firſt met. He aſſured her that, ſo far from hindering it, he was willing to hope that the enjoyment of her company would rather effectually promote it, for he was going on no other buſineſs than this which he had juſt mentioned to her.

Mrs. Rigby, with a very chearful air, congratulated herſelf on the pleaſure of this viſit from two of her beſt neighbours ; and ſetting a cup of ale on the table, while Sally prepared the tea-things, ſhe began to divert them with ſeveral entertaining ſtories of the lovely little boy, who ſtood prattling between the farmer's knees. But we will not affront our readers with the repetition of them, for though the partiality of a fond mother may be excuſed in relating ſuch particulars, and do it with a good grace, before her ſelect friends ; yet the entertainment depends on the friendſhip of the parties, and on many accidental circumſtances. And it is not to be expected that the reader ſhould have felt a friendſhip for the

humble

humble heroes and heroines of this hiſtory, on ſo ſhort an acquaintance.

Take hence a ſober hint, ye fond ſelf-admiring mothers who are addicted to this folly——and who render but an ill compliment to yourſelves, or to your children, when you expreſs ſomething like wonder at finding them rational creatures.

Farmer Wilkins and his fair companion having chatted away two or three hours with the widow, Alice made a motion to go homewards; as it would be very ill taken by her miſtreſs to find her from home at her return. Mr. Wilkins propoſed to accompany her, with a ready civility; which after ſome excuſes, was accepted. And at parting the widow bade her farewel, with a very ſignificant nod, and a ſmile that imported many good wiſhes.

It will not anſwer our purpoſe to relate the converſation that paſſed there; but it ended with as much encouragement to renew a correſpondence on the ſame ſubject, as the farmer could expect from a young woman of real virtue and modeſty; and he parted from her at the end of the 'Squire's orchard with very pleaſing impreſſions on his heart. They managed their future interviews, which were not unfrequent, with ſo much privacy, that it was no ſmall aſtoniſhment to Alice when her miſtreſs, one day, as ſhe was adjuſting her head-dreſs ſpoke to her in this manner: "So, Alice—I find you demure "young women, are as well diſpoſed for a huſband "as the giddy girls that make no ſcruple of owning "it—What! I ſuppoſe you got ſomebody to ſpeak "for you to farmer Wilkins—Well, he's a comely "young fellow, and you will make the handſomeſt "couple, no doubt, in all Northamptonſhire."

It was ſome time before poor Alice recovered from her ſurpriſe at this diſcovery, or got the better of the indignation which one part of her miſtreſs's ſpeech had raiſed in her gentle boſom:—but, recol-

lecting herſelf, ſhe replied, " I am very much con-
" cerned, Madam, that you have ſo mean an opini-
" on of me, as to think I ſhould make offers of my-
" ſelf to any man living : I am ſure you have never
" ſeen any ſuch forward behaviour in me : and I
" hope will never have room to reproach me with
" any thing like it. But it will be very improper for
" me to ſuppoſe that my continuance with you can
" be any longer agreeable." Well, child," replied the Lady, " I ſee your meaning pretty plainly——
" You are to be married, I ſuppoſe, in a month,
" and are willing to give me warning in good time
" —If you not been a mighty ſelf-ſufficient girl,
" you might at leaſt, I think, have conſulted with
" your friends about this match, before you ven-
" tured to determine for yourſelf."——Poor Alice could not refrain from a few tears; ſome, devoted to the honourable remembrance of the real friends ſhe once had, in her fond and prudent parents; ſome occaſioned by the reproachful inſinuations juſt uttered; and others were owing to the intruſion of pain on a mind that had lately been much indulged in the ideas of pleaſure. Having wiped away her tears, ſhe replied to what her Lady had ſaid, in terms of meekneſs and reſpect, " I ſhould have
" thought it rather impertinent, Madam, to have
" troubled you with any mention of my affairs.
" But if I could have imagined you would have
" condeſcended to take any notice of them, I ſhould
" have been very happy to have obtained your ad-
" vice and approbation : and if you know any thing
" now of Mr. Wilkins, madam, that ought to pre-
" vent my giving countenance to him, I ſhall
" think myſelf honoured if you will pleaſe to inform
" me of it."

" No, no, child ; I know nothing bad of the far-
" mer—he is a very honeſt, good man I believe :
" and if he thinks well of you for his dairy—well

" and

"and good—I have no objection." The air with which this was ſpoken ſerved to prevent any reply from the trembling Alice. Her miſtreſs added, "ſhe "ſuppoſed it was her intention to marry ſoon, and "would therefore provide herſelf within the month "if ſhe could." To which Alice ſubmitted in humble ſilence.

It will not be a difficult matter to explain the real cauſe of this unreaſonable diſpleaſure of Mrs. Turnbull's towards her maid. It was not that ſhe had any diſapprobation of her for a ſervant: but it was mortifying to compare her face with that of Alice every day in the ſame glaſs: and her vexation and envy were not likely to abate, on finding that a dependant of hers had preſumed to think and act for herſelf in a buſineſs that concerned her own happineſs and eſtabliſhment in life.

However, the next day, Alice, very unexpectedly, met with almoſt a ſmile of complacence from her miſtreſs, when ſhe came to aſk her permiſſion to go as far as Mrs. Rigby's in the afternoon; which ſhe readily granted: and to account for this extraordinary change, the reader need only be informed, that Mrs. Turnbull had formerly no ſmall jealouſy of her huſband, on account of her fair attendant, which had lately almoſt been forgotten by the perfect indifference he had always apparently maintained, but which was really owing to the care Alice took to ſhun him on every occaſion. The night of the day in which the foregoing converſation happened, Mrs. Turnbull, at ſupper, mentioned the circumſtance of Alice's intended marriage with an air of triumph; but her joy at removing a dreaded rival, as ſhe imagined, did not prevent her from obſerving her huſband ſtart, and look much chagrined when ſhe communicated this piece of intelligence to him!—As jealouſy ſeldom produces much affection for its object, ſo it has an inſeparable in-

ſination to remove that object far out of reach.—Mrs. Turnbull, therefore, on the revival of her ſuſpicions, ſoon found means to ſupply the place of Alice; and let her know, that now matters had gone ſo far with the farmer, it would be the moſt prudent ſtep to marry him very ſoon.

The friendly widow, to whom ſhe had opened all her heart at the firſt meeting after her walk home with Mr. Wilkins, and who had much perſuaded her to accept his offer, now generouſly aſſured her, that if her lady ſhould be ſpedily provided, and ſhe were inclined to come away before the month, ſhe ſhould rejoice in having her company till the affair was more deliberately concluded on.—Nothing could be more acceptable to Alice than this; and, at a fortnight's end, ſhe left her miſtreſs with much ſatisfaction, and retreated to the widow's houſe. Mr. Wilkins's frequent viſits ſoon brought the buſineſs to a concluſion; and, on the third Sunday after, being duly aſked in the church, they were married in preſence of a numerous aſſembly of the neighbours, who greatly reſpected the worthy young farmer.

The curate being a poor man, and the father of ten children, was complimented with an invitation to dine that day, and all his family with the happy couple.——And, as his cuſtom was he gave them a ſermon adapted to the occaſion—with a ſincere good meaning, fixing on theſe words for his text—*All that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world* It was a fortunate time for the diſcuſſion of ſo intereſting a point, when the appearance of our new married friends kept an unuſual number of the audience awake.

"Theſe three," ſaid the honeſt Parſon, "are "the leading paſſions which ſet the whole world in "motion—And that motion is oftentimes ſo violent, "it ſets the world in a flame.—The gratification of

"theſe

" theſe paſſions is but a temporary, and a very dan-
" gerous pleaſure—but this gratification is all that
" this world can afford us."

I muſt not dare to affirm that our amiable couple ſpent their firſt lunation of matrimony *in the moon itſelf*,—*that* heavenly luminary, whoſe revolutions are ſuppoſed to have ſuch extraordinary effects on the connections of human life ;—or, in other words, that they lived *out of the world*.—But they paſſed theſe early days with as much of the Curate's happineſs as new-married people can be ſuppoſed to enjoy.—And as to the triple bliſs of this world, Reaſon (though ſhe was half fuddled) preſided over their tender joys ; Love gave direction to the eye ; and if, in their humble lot, they had the pride of life, it was only the pride of living together.

Let it be here obſerved, for the ſober reflection of the rich and exalted, that in ſome ſcarce inſtances, a ſort of happineſs prevails among the lower claſſes of people, almoſt equal (at leaſt in appearance) to that which ſplendor and wealth are ſuppoſed ſo uniformly to enſure to the poſſeſſors. It is, no doubt, a deception on the poor creatures, though a happy one ; and it were a pity that they ſhould be undeceived. If the ſources of it, which are ignorance, and meanneſs of ſpirit, do but hold out till death, they are almoſt in a condition as enviable as that of the richeſt commoner in England, or the firſt miniſter of ſtate. This may help to make our apology with the more ambitious reader, for uſing ſome ſtrong expreſſions to deſcribe the happineſs of a farmer and his wife.

We have already hinted at the good liking which 'Squire Turnbull had conceived for the youth and beauty of Alice ; and often had his mouth watered when any accident threw her in his way. But the fear of raiſing the devil in his own houſe, which it would be impoſſible for him ever to lay, even with

the

the Curate's aſſiſtance, reſtrained him within due bounds.

The information which his lady gave of Alice's intended marriage, produced in him, indeed, a momentary vexation; but, on ſecond thoughts, he highly approved it; for reaſons which we may preſently explain.

As farmer Wilkins was his tenant, he honoured him, ſoon after his marriage, with a viſit; walked with him over his grounds; examined the buildings, and, of his own accord, propoſed ſeveral improvements and repairs, which he told Wilkins, ſhould be executed without any expence to him; for he loved to encourage young beginners.—He condeſcended to ſit down and taſte a glaſs of the farmer's old beer, and was very facetious and chatty with Mrs. Wilkins: whoſe reſpectful, and yet eaſy manner, had a ſtrong effect on the amorous 'Squire.

This introductory viſit had opened the way for a greater familiarity; and he would ſometimes compliment Wilkins, by conſulting him on affairs relating to the management of ſome part of the eſtate. In ſhort, the farmer became, in a little, ſo great a favourite, that Mr. Turnbull requeſted him to act for him as his ſteward, in the room of old Thomſon, who was now ſuperannuated. As he made very advantageous offers to him, and his ſituation admitted of a proper attention to the duties of the office, he accepted it.

In a few weeks after this appointment, there was a conſiderable horſe-fair at about thirty miles diſtant. As Wilkins was one of the beſt judges of horſe-fleſh in the county, and the 'Squire had determined to purchaſe a new ſet for his coach, he deſired him to go over, and get this buſineſs accompliſhed for him.

This new employment was not very agreeable to Mrs. Wilkins, who could not help expreſſing her uneaſineſs

uneaſineſs at theſe two days abſence within the firſt two months of their happy union. But, on her fond huſband's, aſſurance, that he would ſhorten his ſtay as much as poſſible, ſhe avoided giving any diſquiet to him, by indulging her own.

The evening Wilkins went, to the no little ſurprize of his wife, who had frequently entertained ſuſpicions which ſhe never communicated, the 'Squire called in, and found the huſband's place ſupplied by the good widow Rigby, who, with her little boy, had come over, at the earneſt ſollicitation of her friend, to keep her company during her huſband's abſence.

He thought to have found her alone, and his mortification at this diſappointment was very great, though he ſmothered it as well as he could—he entered into a converſation with the women, ſitting himſelf down between them with the greateſt familiarity—He made much of little Tom, who received his civilities with a very baſhful reſerve, at firſt; but he ſoon aſſumed more confidence.

Mrs. Wilkins was a good deal embarraſſed when ſhe found that her viſitant ſeemed reſolved to honour them with his company for the evening; but ſhe did not dare, for her huſband's ſake, to neglect any tokens of common reſpect; and, accordingly, aſking if he pleaſed to take ſuch refreſhment as their houſe afforded, ſhe brought a piece of cold gammon, and ſet ſome of the 'Squire's favourite liquor on the table.

We know not whether to approve or condemn Mrs. Wilkins's conduct in this inſtance. But ſo it was; and Mr. Turnbull the more readily accepted the humble invitation, as his Lady was confined, he ſaid, to her chamber, being taken ill that morning —So that he was quite lonely at home.

The beer and bacon were good—A little ſnug fire, ſurrounded with every token of neatneſs, a-

greeably

greeably removed the chill of a September evening. The Squire eat, with many commendations of his treatment, and drank till he was quite merry: and now he began to be very ſweet and facetious with both the women. He would have a ſmack of each of them, that he would,—"I hope no offence, Mrs. "Wilkins—If honeſt Wilkins were but here, I know "he would allow twenty of them."

This firſt effuſion of his merriment was paſſed over with a modeſt kind of indifference, by both: but when he became a little more free with his company, and ſwore he muſt have another ſmack, Mrs. Rigby began with a very reſentful countenance to beg, "that he would behave himſelf with a little "more decency; that though they were not people "of fortune like him,—he had no right to inſult "them in this manner: and if he acted beneath his "character as a gentleman, he muſt expect to be "treated according to that he aſſumed."

This ſpeech did not in the leaſt diſconcert the 'Squire: but laughing at the widow, he told her, "If ſhe did not like mirth and good fellowſhip, he "was ſure his little angel here, would not be ſo "angry with him"——And at the ſame moment flung his arms round Mrs. Wilkins; who ſtruggled ſome time in vain to get rid of him.

At this inſtant, little Tom, who had liſtened from the chimney corner, and ſtared at all that paſſed, ſeeing his good friend Mrs Wilkins in imminent danger, as he thought, and very roughly treated, *reſolutely* aſſailed the 'Squire's legs with a thorn buſh, which lay by him half burnt; and by this attack diverted his whole attention to another object. The amorous 'Squire no ſooner ſaw what had given him this diſturbance, than he laughed very heartily at the boy; and ſitting down, was going to take him on his knee, when the little fellow ran away, hallowing

ing and crying in ſuch a manner as not eaſily to be pacified.

Mrs Wilkins could no longer contain herſelf; ſhe reproached him for his treatment of her, and upbraided him for his meanneſs, in the moſt bitter terms her rage could ſuggeſt: ſhe was well ſeconded by the widow, who took her friend's part, and treated him very contemptuouſly.

The 'Squire, aware now that he had gone too far, ſubmiſſively aſked pardon; and carrying it off only as a little innocent mirth, quietly mended his draught, and after promiſing to favour the farmer with every advantage in his power, he withdrew, to the great relief of our two female friends, and the ſincere joy of poor Tom, who now hated the ſight of him.

The 'Squire, who had been led into this trifling behaviour rather by accident than deſign, repented of having indulged himſelf in it, to the depriving him, perhaps, of a favourable opportunity in future to accompliſh his fixed purpoſe, which was by ſome means or other to have a taſte of the honeſt farmer's joys: for he had long fixed an eye of deſire upon the fair Alice. His hopes were now a little diſturbed by his own imprudence, and yet his paſſions were more enflamed than ever by the rich cordial he had already ſipped. So much was he attracted by the charms of Mrs. Wilkins, that he could not brook the diſappointment of his ſchemes to improve his acquaintance with her during the farmer's abſence. We have hinted at his inclinations towards her when ſhe lived in his houſe; and that, ſhe was kept as much out of the way as poſſible, by her Lady. His honour had another affair of gallantry then on his hands, which kept him more in government of himſelf at home. This he had got weary of, and had been hatching ſchemes for the laſt fortnight of Alice's reſidence, to ſuperſede Wilkins in the poſſeſ-

ſion

ſion of a girl that appeared more lovely to him every day he ſaw her. But he had been diſappointed.

The marriage of Alice had not conquered his paſſion; and he ſeldom ſet his heart on any thing without uſing every poſſible means to accompliſh it. From hence proceeded all his kindneſs to the farmer.

In his opinion, the moſt favourable opportunity now preſented itſelf——Her huſband's abſence—his own power and rank in the country,—a timid woman, that had long been taught to fear and reſpect him; all circumſtances ſeemed to conſpire to give an appearance of ſucceſs to any attempt he might be induced to make on her, and if every obſtruction was removed he had no ſort of doubt, ſuch was his opinion of the ſex, but that ſhe would yield to his offers. How to remove thoſe obſtructions, of which the friendly widow was the greateſt, employed his brain all the way home, and the remaining part of the night.

While his imagination was thus engaged, our two females were congratulating themſelves on his departure; and ſitting in judgment on his behaviour, condemned it ſeverely: but they concluded it muſt be owing to his having drank too much; and agreed that he would never attempt ſuch unbecoming freedoms again, after the ſharp reproof he had met with from them both. They retired to enjoy that undiſturbed reſt which virtue ever enſures; nor did the intended victim of the 'Squire's brutal paſſion even dream of the villainous ſcheme that was then hatching againſt her honour and her peace.

When they aroſe in the morning, they expected the 'Squire would come to make ſome apologies for his conduct the preceding night, but they found themſelves agreeably diſappointed when he did not appear—Between five and ſix o'clock in the evening, farmer Johnſon, a neighbour of Mrs. Rigby's, called upon

upon her at Mr. Wilkins's—The farmer ſeemed very much agitated, and was at a loſs to explain the reaſon of his coming to ſee her—The widow obſerving him in this ſituation, at firſt imagined he was not well; and aſking him what was the matter, offered him a dram, which he accepted, and then getting a little more ſpirit, he broke the ice as cautiouſly as he could, for fear of alarming the widow and Mrs. Wilkins, and told his ſtory—not without marks of terror and affright—The purport of it was,—"That "as his man was coming home from plough about "four o'clock, he was met by a man on horſeback "muffled up in a great coat, with amonſtrous noſe, "which frightened the poor fellow ſo he could take "notice of nothing elſe—that this man aſked him if "he did not belong to farmer Johnſon; to which "being anſwered that he did, he gave him a letter, "which he deſired him to give directly into his maſ-"ter's hands as ſoon as ever he got home.—That he "rode off then as faſt as the beaſt could go, without "ſayingany more--and the man gave him the letter, "which the farmer ſhewed, and informed them "that there was a deſign to ſet fire to his houſe, "and the widow Rigby's that night—That the "writer of that letter, deteſting ſuch damnable "cruelty, had given them warning, that they might "take care of them ſelves, by watching all night; "and ſigned himſelf, his unknown friend."

This epiſtle threw the poor widow into dreadful agitations; and the farmer was not more compoſed. A council was immediately held, to conſider what was beſt to be done; and it was unanimouſly agreed, that it would be the ſafeſt and moſt prudent ſtep for the widow to go home, and ſit up all night, with lights in the different parts of the houſe, to ſhew the villains that they were up and on their guard. As a further protection, Mrs. Wilkins offered one of her men to the widow to ſit up along with her,

her, and Johnſon offer'd another. Mrs. Rigby, and Tommy, who would not be left behind, and the farmer, who was very uneaſy till he got home, accompanied by one of Mrs. Wilkins's ſervants, ſet out to protect their dwellings from the deſigns of the incendiaries; and in imagination, they had already anticipated the horrors of the conflagration.

The ſagacious reader will perceive, in this terrible letter, the conſequence of the 'Squire's machinations: for it was no other than a favourite ſervant of his that deliver'd the letter to Johnſon's ploughman, which he wrote himſelf, yet was ſo diſguiſed by the help of a fictitious noſe, that he rendered himſelf unknown. He expected that Johnſon would communicate the contents of this horrid ſcroll to the widow; and every thing happened as he wiſhed. He rejoiced therefore in the ſucceſs of his ſchemes, when he ſaw Johnſon and the widow leave Mrs. Wilkins's houſe. Will, for ſo was his thorough-paced pandar called, hurried home to acquaint his maſter in what train things were. He had not been idle; for, concluding that ſo dreadful a deſign would alarm the farmer and the widow, and make her leave Mrs. Wilkins, which was what he aimed at; he had, in the mean time, been ſounding Wilkins's ploughman, a drunken lazy fellow, and found him apt for his purpoſe. Gaining him therefore to aſſiſt him in whatever he ſhould deſire, by the actual bribe of half a guinea, and many promiſes, he prevailed on him to admit him privately into his maſter's houſe at night, when there ſhould be no fear of a diſcovery. His ſanguine imagination now repreſented his wiſhes compleated, and his paſſion gratified. He went, at the hour appointed by his truſty agent, to the farmer's houſe, where he was received by the ploughman, and conducted to his bed, where he was informed he might lie undiſcovered, as that was the only place that his miſtreſs

did

did not ſearch every night before ſhe went to bed. Here lay the libidinous 'Squire, anxiouſly expecting the time for the ſervants to retire to reſt, and give him an opportunity of reaching Mrs. Wilkins's chamber. At laſt the houſe was quiet: and having given his prey time enough to get ſettled in her firſt ſleep, he ſtruck a light with a piſtol tender-box he had in his pocket, and lighted his dark lanthorn, which was his conſtant companion on all ſuch expeditions, and purſued his way through the houſe to Mrs. Wilkins's chamber. The latch of the door was gently lifted up, and he had gained admiſſion into the room before the gentle Alice was alarmed by the approach of her deſtroyer As he ſtepped, the floor creaked, and Mrs. Wilkins awaked. She could ſcarcely credit her eyes, when, by the help of the almoſt expired candle on the hearth, ſhe perceived, or fancied ſhe perceived, a man approaching her bedſide. She was ſoon relieved from her doubts by a diſagreeable certainty of the reality. The 'Squire, ſeeing her eyes open, threw himſelf on his knees, and began the attack in the moſt ſoothing manner—ſwearing how long he had loved her, and how much—that he could not live without her—and unleſs——She now had got the better of her fears; and her indignation at his baſe attempt on her honour, roſe in proportion to the heinouſneſs of his crime. She interrupted, and told him ſhe knew not how he had got acceſs to her chamber, but ſuppoſed it was by ſome baſe and villainous means—that ſhe inſiſted upon his retiring inſtantly, or ſhe would alarm the houſe, and call the ſervants up to treat him as he deſerved, but though ſhe was innocent, yet her character might, nevertheleſs, ſuffer; and ſhe hoped he would not be ſo cruel as to injure her.

This parley only ſerved to inflame his deſires. He repeated his vows of affection, and, drawing nearer to the bed, attempted to put his hand on her boſom;

ſom ; ſhe ſcreamed out, and, by that means, awoke Molly, who lay in the ſame bed with her in her huſband's abſence, and whom all the preceding converſation had no effect upon, as it was uttered in a low voice ; nor did the amorous 'Squire perceive Mrs. Wilkins's companion, who, fatigued with the toils of the day, lay in a deep ſleep by her ſide, almoſt entirely covered by the bedcloaths, till the ſcream, her miſtreſs gave, rouſed her. Alarmed, though not thoroughly wakened, ſhe ſtarted up-an-end in the bed, and aſked what was the matter. The 'Squire, aſtoniſhed at this unexpected aid on the ſide of the miſtreſs, ſtood aghaſt and confounded. Mrs. Wilkins then repeated her deſire of his abſence ; which he refuſing to comply with, Molly ſlipped on her petticoats, and, faſtening her gown about her, laid hold of the 'Squire by the collar, and fairly dragged him out of the room ; not without much ſtruggling, though the conſequence proved that ſhe was, endowed with more corporal ſtrength than he was, though a man of three thouſand a year. When ſhe had got him on the ſtairs, he began to expoſtulate with her, and endeavoured to prevail on her, by offering her five guineas, to conduct him back to her miſtreſs again. But this, and every other argument he could urge, ſhe rejected with great contempt ; and telling him ſhe would not quit him till ſhe ſaw him fairly out of the houſe, adding a few taunts at his want of ſtrength ſufficient to reſiſt her, and that it was not worth her while to call any of the men to her aſſiſtance ; he found it would be ineffectual to ſtay any longer, ſo he marched down ſtairs with the victorious Molly in the rear, who opened the door and thruſt him into the yard, telling him to cool his courage there ; then faſtening the doors, ſhe returned to her miſtreſs, who was, by this time, up and dreſſed, looking through a window at the diſappointed 'Squire trudging homewards. After

thanking

thanking Molly for her timely and vigorous aſſiſtance, and deſiring her not to mention this matter on any account, they went to bed again. Molly ſoon fell aſleep, but Mrs. Wilkins could not compoſe herſelf, ſo much had ſhe been alarmed at this deſperate attempt; many things did ſhe revolve in her imagination, and among the reſt, conceived an imperfect notion of the 'Squire's ſcheme of getting Mrs. Rigby out of the way, by ſending the terrible letter, already mentioned. However, ſhe did not cloſe her eyes till day-light; aſſured of her ſafety, and then her fears ſubſided, and ſhe got a little ſleep.

The following evening her huſband was to return, and how to tell him this affair ſhe knew not.—Much did ſhe ſuffer in her own mind, before ſhe could come to any reſolution.——Mrs Rigby arrived very ſeaſonably to her relief——To her ſhe imparted the whole tranſaction, and aſked her advice how to act.—The widow, who had more experience than her friend, ſeemed to think the whole affair was a ſcheme of Turnbull's, and that a man who was capable of taking ſuch extraordinary means to accompliſh his vile purpoſes, was much to be dreaded. She was convinced that there was no deſign of ſetting her houſe on fire, and that the letter was only a ſcheme to draw her out of the way.—Mrs. Wilkins was for acquainting her huſband; but her friend adviſed her rather to delay doing ſo, till they ſhould ſee how the Squire would behave on his return.

The farmer had called at the 'Squire's as he came by, and learned from the coachman that he was to go for London with the family, on the next day but one. When he mentioned this circumſtance in the evening to his wife (after the firſt two hours mutual congratulations and endearments were over) it ſufficiently enforced the prudence of the widow's advice: but it was not without great pain, that a female mind could be reſtrained from communicating

an

an intereſting ſecret to a party ſo much concerned, and ſo ſincerely loved. Only the fear of miſchief that might happen to her huſband from his juſt reſentment of ſuch baſe uſage, could have over-balanced that pain.

Mr. Wilkins the next morning quietly ſettled his buſineſs of the horſes, in which he had ſucceeded to Mr. Turnbull's ſatisfaction, who liberally rewarded him for his trouble: and the day after the family ſet off for London; Mrs. Turnbull's bad ſtate of health, and the importance of proper advice, being the ſuppoſed inducement, for their going two months earlier than uſual.

Words cannot well deſcribe the rage and vexation which poor Wilkins manifeſted, when he heard from his wife a full account of the infamous attempt that had been made. He was naturally of a very calm and patient temper. But touched in ſo tender a point, it is no wonder that every painful paſſion was irritated by ſuch a provocation.

He could not help, for the firſt time, expreſſing a ſhort anger that this affair had been concealed from him, till his enemy had eſcaped. for he had the bittereſt revenge in his heart at the inſtant. But the fever abating by degrees, he could not reply to the vindication which Mrs. Wilkins made of her own prudence in the delay: and her old friend the widow coming in to ſee how matters went, they by degrees reſtored the worthy farmer to ſome compoſure. However he immediatly wrote the following letter to the 'Squire.

To James Turnbull, Eſq.

"SIR,

"YOU will not be much ſurprized at hearing from me in this manner: but I am

"determined

"determined to have as little to do as poſſible with "ſuch men as yourſelf. You thought fit to make "me ſteward of your eſtate, but I will have no more "to do do with it: and ſhall leave my farm and "the ſcandalous neighbourhood of it as ſoon as "poſſible. So you will pleaſe to take this as warn-"ing, and provide as you ſee fit.

"I leave you to the juſt reproaches of your con-"ſcience——If you have one, which will tell you "how much you have injured and inſulted me, who "would have been to you otherwiſe

An uſeful and faithful ſervant,

JOHN WILKINS.

P. S. I ſhall be glad to ſettle all my accounts with any proper perſon you think fit to appoint, or with any body rather than yourſelf.

About a week after this letter, a perſon was ſent to ſettle with Mr. Wilkins; and that buſineſs being done, he applied himſelf to providing another farm, which after a great deal of trouble was accompliſhed.

He alſo diſpoſed of the little freehold before mentioned very advantageouſly: and as he could not ſurrender the leaſe which he had from Lord L——, or aſſign it to any other tenant without his Lordſhip's permiſſion, he went over to the great hall to obtain leave for that purpoſe, as he had been offered a very handſome conſideration for the remainder of his term. His Lordſhip was then in the country, and always had a very good opinion of Wilkins; and as his anceſtors had been for a long time tenants to the L——' family, he expreſſed great concern at his reſolution of quitting that part of the country, and aſked his reaſon for doing ſo. This the farmer could not give, and rather evaded the queſtion.

Indeed

Indeed it was by his wife's ſolicitations that he was induced to quit that part of the country: he would have remained and defended the honour of his wife at all hazards, but her timidity and entreaties prevailed over his reſolutions; and when he had got his affairs ſettled, they went acroſs to Berkſhire, where he had procured a large farm, and Mrs Rigby at their earneſt requeſt quitted her little houſe, and accompanied them. Wilkins could not help grieving at being thus obliged to quit the land of his fathers, and conceived it very hard that the villainy of one great and rich man ſhould thus embitter his happineſs, and force him to ſeek a ſettlement among ſtrangers, if he wiſhed to preſerve his wife from inſults, and her honour from contamination. Theſe are the injuries which no law remedies, and which yet are very grievous. But ſurely the day will come, when the proud oppreſſor ſhall repent of his injuſtice, and the wealthy ſpoiler ſhall lament his miſdeeds, and wiſh he had reſtored an hundred-fold; when humility and modeſt virtue ſhall be exalted, and the proud and the ſcornful abaſed.

BOOK II.

DURING their journey in that part of Oxfordſhire, through which our exiles were obliged to paſs, Mrs. Rigby obſerved to her companions, that ſhe had ſpent ſome of the happieſt moments of her life in that country, and the remembrance of them were yet dear to her.—Mrs. Wilkins declared ſhe was very much rejoiced that their road lay that way, ſince it gave her pleaſure.—"In this country." ſaid the widow, "I paſſed ſeveral years, and form-
"ed thoſe connections which gave me much plea-
"ſure then, and have been the cauſe of my preſent
"independance."

" independance." This was the firſt time that ever the widow ſeemed willing to communicate her affairs; for our young couple only knew her as a friend and a neighbour, and, as ſuch, eſteemed her.—Wilkins, therefore, endeavoured to improve this diſpoſition, which, he hoped, might lead her to make a diſcovery of herſelf, and aſked her, what part of Oxfordſhire ſhe had reſided in. She replied, " In the " village of C—, in Dr. Wakefield's family."——Mrs. Wilkins aſked if he was any relation to that Lady whom ſhe had ſeen at her houſe of that name.—" She is the Doctor's daughter, and my very good " friend," replied the widow.——Mrs. Wilkins throwing out ſome hints that ſhe ſhould like to know how ſhe came into that family, as ſhe was born in a diſtant county; and her huſband ſignifying a like curioſity,——" I aſſure you, my good friends," ſaid " ſhe, " I have very little to relate concerning my- " ſelf, that will afford you entertainment; but, as " you ſeem to deſire it, I will, as far as my memory " will hold out, give you all the hiſtory of my fa- " mily, and of thoſe circumſtances which have been " of the moſt importance to me in life.—They are " not very intereſting; but the relation may ſerve " to beguile the tedioufneſs of the way, &c.

" My father, whoſe name was Janſon, lived at " B— in Leiceſterſhire for many years: he was a " man of ſome conſequence in the town; for there " were, at leaſt, an hundred people in it, depend- " ed upon him for their daily bread, which he diſtri- " buted to them with the greateſt chearfulneſs im- " aginable: but I do not ſay that he was quite di- " ſintereſted in this; for, by his induſtry at his buſi- " neſs as a baker, he had increaſed the little wealth " my grandfather had left him, to ſuch a ſum as " enabled him to live in a decent and comfortable " manner: although my father's pocket would not " afford his children any very expenſive education,

" we were brought up in a ſort of a genteeliſh way:
" but it was purely owing, I muſt ſay, to his care
" that we had any education at all. For though
" it is rather ſhocking to give an ill character of ſo
" near a relation as a mother, yet I will aſſure you,
" Mrs. Wilkins, ſhe was the moſt like Mrs. Watſon,
" whoſe miſmanagement of her family, and her in-
" dolence we have ſo often heard cenſured, of any
" perſon I know. There were no other children than
" myſelf and a younger ſiſter; they had more who
" died in infancy. As my mother had the misfortune
" to be born a gentlewoman, ſhe could not bear
" the thoughts of looking after any of her houſhold
" concerns, of even aſſiſting the ſervant in any thing
" that related to us. From the time that I was old
" enough to make compariſons between the tem-
" pers of people, I grew aſhamed of the pride and
" ſlothfulneſs that appeared in my mother's be-
" haviour, and which increaſed in her every day.

" My father was often very unhappy at this; and
" I believe now that he thought himſelf in a worſe
" ſtate than if he had been a widower. He had a
" faithful and uſeful ſervant to look after us: but
" ſhe had full employment for one perſon in attend-
" ing my mother. The expences of ſo ill managed
" a family were not very ſmall; for the good na-
" ture of my dear father, provided not only what
" we wanted, but almoſt every thing my mother
" choſe.

" There is ſome truth perhaps in rhe old proverb
" that," 'A light heeled mother makes a heavy
" heeled daughter.' " But indeed it was not verified
" in our family: the reverſe of it was rather mani-
" feſted there. My father having contracted the
" utmoſt averſion to indolence, (if, he had it not na-
" turally) took care that we ſhould be brought up
" in every ſpecies of induſtry. And at my eigh-
" teenth year, though as attentive as he could be

" to

" to his buſineſs, yet, he was ſo alarmed with the
" apprehenſion of being quite reduced, that he
" parted with the ſervant, and all the buſineſs of
" the family fell on me and my ſiſter.

" My mother was mortified greatly at this, but
" was obliged to ſubmit to it. But whatever trou-
" ble it gave her it ſoon ſubſided; for ſhe was ac-
" cuſtomed to caſt off every thing from her mind
" that gave her uneaſineſs, and ſeemed to be vexed
" at any thing only as far as it tended to diſturb her
" into action. The life we lived was a very diſa-
" greeable one to me. I uſed to riſe early, and get
" the houſe to rights againſt my father choſe to
" breakfaſt. At about eleven o'clock in the day
" my mother roſe, and in about two hours would
" put every thing about in confuſion again, and
" keep me fully employed in fetching her this thing,
" carrying away that, and changing it for another;
" ſo that we ſeldom got a dinner in any regular
" time, and without ſome vexation to my father.
" The miſchievous effects of indolence appeared
" ſtrongly to me, during the laſt year of my poor
" mother's life; ſhe grew very fat and purſy, and
" had frequent diſorders in a variety of forms, that
" threatened her with the event which ſoon follow-
" ed. A complication of diſeaſes baffled all the aſ-
" ſiſtance that could be got for her, and the pro-
" curing of which involved my father in great ex-
" pences; and after being given over for above two
" months, ſhe died."

" I own, Mrs. Wilkins, it ſhocks me to think of my
" diſpoſition at that time: but, if I ſpeak the truth,
" I was really glad at heart at this change."

" Why, I ſuppoſe," ſaid Mrs. Wilkins, you were
" not glad, really, at your mother's death, but on
" account of the much happier ſtate you were in by
" means of that event."

" Very true, I ſhould have grieved, nay I did

" grieve at the thoughts of never ſeeing her more,
" and at the ſolemnity of death in our family ; but
" I was, indeed, introduced by it to a happier ſtate,
" for almoſt a twelvemonth. It was a delight to
" me, now, to be at the head of my father's little
" family, and find myſelf capable (which I never
" was before) of putting things in ſuch order as
" pleaſed him. But, in about eight months time,
" we loſt my father's company, which uſed to
" chear us of an evening, and were much left to
" ourſelves. He married a ſecond wife within the
" twelvemonth, which put a compleat end to all
" my happineſs at home. I have often obſerved
" ſince, how natural it is for people to fly from one
" extreme to another. My father, no doubt, had
" determined with himſelf, that if ever he married
" again it ſhould be to a woman of ſome life and
" ſpirit ; and, perhaps, might be ſo intent on this
" part of her character as to be blind to every thing
" elſe. My new mother was about eight years
" older than myſelf : a managing woman ; and
" well qualified to govern every branch of a family,
" not excepting the huſband himſelf.

" It can afford you no pleaſure, my dear Mrs.
" Wilkins, to relate to you my daily increaſing un-
" happineſs under this new adminiſtration : in a few
" words, before ſix months were paſt I loſt all my
" reputation as a houſewife, and all my comfort as
" a daughter ; and for the greater part of a year I
" had not the good fortune to do one ſingle thing,
" even by accident, as I ſhould.

" My father had, however, compaſſion enough
" to releaſe me from my bondage, by providing a
" place for me in the town ; where I had to wait
" on an old lady of conſiderable fortune. With
" her I continued till death removed her from any
" farther need of a ſervant or a companion.

" After

" After ſpending a week at home, I got into an " advantageous ſtation, in a reputable family at " Leiceſter : there were three young ladies, on " whom I attended ; and they had one brother, a " youth of about nineteen years of age, the liber- " tine favourite of a fond father and mother. From " his ridiculous behaviour I had no ſmall trouble, " before I had been there two months ; but by the " favour of his ſiſters, who ſhewed great love for " me ; and the young gentleman being ſent to a " military ſchool near London, I paſſed away two " years very happily. I had great opportunity of " improving myſelf in needlework, and, beſides " that, of getting an acquaintance with the beſt " books of entertainment and inſtruction : for I was " often employed in reading to the young ladies, " under the direction of their mother, who was " a very ſenſible, prudent woman. But my military " gentleman's return, at length, interrupted this " peaceful ſtate of quiet and happineſs. He ſeem- " ed to think it but a natural right, belonging to his " new character, to have an entire liberty with " every young woman whoſe face pleaſed him, which " mine had the misfortune to do. I hardly think it " worth while to tell you of the many impudent " attempts he made on me, which, I dare ſay, he " thought were exceſſively worthy of him ; but there " is one which I muſt not omit, as it had really " like to have been a very unhappy one for me.

" There happened to be a good deal of company " in the houſe one night ; and I was obliged to give " up my chamber to the ſervants of a Lady, who " was there on a viſit, and lodge with the houſe " maid.

" My companion having extraordinary buſineſs " to do, roſe very early, ſome hours before my " uſual time. My fine young maſter, as I found af- " terwards, had ſat up with two fit companions of

" his who were there, till morning light had warn-
" ed them to get to bed : and they met the maid
" coming down, as they went up ſtairs. Whether
" he heard any thing the night before that put ſome
" ſcheme in his head which the ſeeing her up
" might aſſiſt him in, or not, I do not know : but
" I met with ſuch a ſurpriſe, as almoſt put me out
" of my ſenſes ; for I had but juſt fallen aſleep a-
" gain after being diſturbed by her geting up,
" when I was awakened thoroughly by the preſ-
" ſure of his impudent arms round me : for he ſoon
" gave me to know it was no other than himſelf, in
" a tone of voice which ſeemed to ſuppoſe I ſhould
" treat him with reſpect, How I eſcaped, I can
" hardly tell you ; but conſidering the infamous
" advantages he had, I have often wondered at it.
" Whether he was afraid of my alarming the houſe
" or not, I cannot tell : however, he left the room
" very quietly.

" The next morning I relinquiſhed my place,
" plainly informing his mother of the reaſon : who
" would fain have had me ſtay ; promiſing to pre-
" vent any danger of the like kind for the future.
" I was rather inclined to go, and did ſo in a
" month's time ; but ſhe was ſo far ſenſible of the
" great reaſon I had for deſiring to leave her, that
" ſhe not only forgave me, but very ſtrongly re-
" commended me to Dr. Wakefield's, who was then
" a widower, and had one only daughter, upon
" whom it was my happy lot to attend. You have
" ſeen the young lady at my houſe Mrs. Wilkins ;
" but could have no opportunity to know more of
" her than that ſhe was then exceedingly hand-
" ſome."

" Yes I remember," ſaid Mrs. Wilkins, it was
" the week before I firſt met Mr. Wilkins at your
" houſe. I took great notice of the lady, and I
" thought then ſhe was the fineſt figure of a wo-

" man.

" man I ever ſaw. She had ſuch a delightful com-
" plexion, ſuch ſoftneſs in her features, and there
" was ſomething ſo graceful in her perſon,
" that I well recollect how much I was taken with
" her: and I thought more reſpectfully of you,
" than I had done before, when I obſerved her con-
" verſe with you with ſo much familiarity and cor-
" diality, and ſuch humility and benignity in her
" looks, and I liked her the better for taking ſo
" much notice of little Tommy."

" She was about ſixteen when I firſt went there:
" and I was ſoon convinced of the happineſs of my
" ſituation: ſhe treated me with ſo much kindneſs,
" and ſhewed ſo much genuine goodneſs of temper,
" as quite engaged my whole affection. Indeed it
" was evident ſhe had received the beſt impreſſions
" of the mind from the virtues of her father, who
" was a very worthy man. He had ſeveral good
" livings, beſides an eſtate from his own family, and
" you would be ſurprized to think what a bleſſing
" he was to the whole neighbourhood. His houſe
" was the ſeat of benevolence, plenty, and peace.
" He had married late in life, and had loſt his wife
" about ſeven years before I went there. This
" only daughter, the centre of all his beſt earthly
" affections, had been the conſtant object of his
" cares: he ſpared no expence nor pains in her edu-
" cation: and enjoyed the utmoſt ſatisfaction in
" the daily evidences of her improvement. She
" was miſtreſs of ſeveral of the modern languages;
" and he had inſtructed her in every branch of
" knowledge within his compaſs, which might con-
" tribute to her uſefulneſs or enjoyment in life.

" I had the happineſs to obtain the confidence of
" this young Lady; and may ſay, lived five years in
" the family, the happieſt of any in my life. There
" were ſome events which happened while I was

" there, which would be much more entertaining
" to you than any I have related concerning my-
" ſelf: but I muſt not on any account enter upon
" them.

" When I had paſſed two years in this agreeable
" family, Mr. Rigby made his addreſſes to me. He
" had lived a long while as a gardener with the
" Doctor, being bred up in that profeſſion by his
" father, who had ſerved in that capacity for thirty
" years: his father had left him ſome money, which
" his induſtry had increaſed. He was a handſome
" ſprightly young man, and made much greater
" advances in my affection, than I was for a long
" time willing he ſhould know.

" Often had he diſtinguiſhed me in his eſteem,
" by a variety of little ſervices: and whenever he
" brought in a freſh ſupply of flowers for my young
" Lady's chimney, I was ſure to have an elegant
" noſegay from him, which pleaſed me more by
" his manner of giving, than by all its fragrance.

" He opened his mind to me one morning, when
" I had been early into the gardens to enjoy the
" ſweet ſcents of the flowers, and happened to turn
" my ſteps to the part where he was working.
" But though he met not at firſt with that encoura-
" gement which the ſincerity and virtue of his paſ-
" ſion merited, yet I walked in the garden every
" morning that was fair, and at length was ſeldom
" to be met with any where elſe, when diſengaged
" from my dear young Lady. She ſoon diſcover-
" ed our amour, and wiſhed hearty ſucceſs to it. I
" conſulted with my father, who approved of the
" match, and told me, he would give Mr. Rigby as
" much as he could ſpare out of the money he had
" ſaved in buſineſs: for he had been very ſucceſs-
" ful and ſaving ſince my mother's death. Having
" this encouragement to think of ſettling for life,
" we thought of marrying ſoon: and Doctor

" Wakefield,

" Wakefield, on knowing our engagements, very " kindly offered us a continuance in the houſe, till " we could diſpoſe of ourſelves more conveniently " in the neighbourhood, propoſing to continue Mr. " Rigby in his employment. Accordingly in a few " weeks time his curate pronounced the nuptial " bleſſing on us: and I aſſure you the day of this " ceremony was a moſt chearful feſtival to all the " ſervants in the family, by the Doctor's liberality, " and the kind attention of his amiable daughter.

" In ſome time after, Mr. Rigby provided a ſmall " tenement within a mile of the houſe; where he " had a little nurſery of his own that ſerved to bring " us in a tolerable ſubſiſtence. Our humble but hap- " py dwelling was often honoured by the company " of Miſs Wakefield, who had now taken my ſiſter " into my place, on my making application to her " for this purpoſe.

" Things not anſwering well there, Mr. Rigby " had the offer of an advantageous place in the " 'Squire's family, as you know, and with the Doc- " tor's approbation accepted it.

" He had a nurſery there, and was beginning to " thrive in the world, when he was taken violently " ill with a fever, which aroſe from a cold, and died " in a ſhort time, leaving me diſconſolate, and never " will I," ſaid ſhe, ſhedding ſome tears at the recollection of her loſs, " never will I change my ſtate a- " gain.

" You now know almoſt as much of my hiſtory, " Mrs. Wilkins, as I do myſelf. I have only to add, " that I am to this hour under the greateſt obliga- " tions to the kind generous heart of Miſs Wakefield, " for the capacity of living in ſo eaſy and happy a " way as I do at preſent."

Wilkins and his wife returned many thanks to their friend for imparting her hiſtory to them: they ex-

preſſed much admiration of the Doctor's character, and aſked if he was yet living; to which Mrs. Rigby replied, that he had been dead theſe two years; and that ſhe had not ſeen Miſs Wakefield ſo long, that ſhe was anxious to know what was become of her, and would write to her and inform her where ſhe was removed to; as ſoon as ever they were ſettled, which took up ſome time and trouble before it was compleated. Mrs. Rigby accordingly wrote to her friend Miſs Wakefield, who ſoon after came over, and ſpent ſome days at the farmer's. Her deportment there only ſerved to encreaſe the good opinion which they had of her, and her fondneſs for little Tommy, then between three and four years old, which the child returned, and was much delighted with, endeared her to them.

Whether it was that Miſs Wakefield was pleaſed with the Wilkins's family, or from what other motive it was that ſhe came ſo frequently there, and held many private conferences with her friend Mrs. Rigby, the farmer and his wife could not tell. But we, poſſeſſed of that inſtructive knowledge and penetration, which ever attend a biographer and hiſtorian, ſhall explain the cauſe of Miſs Wakefield's viſits at Wilkins's, and the ſubject of the conferences that were held between her and the widow. They were related to the farmer and his wife by Mrs Rigby; but inſtead of following her manner, we ſhall aſſume the pen in our own proper perſon, and unravel the whole affair to him, by firſt making him acquainted with the hiſtory of Miſs Wakefield.

The very pleaſant village of C——n, in Oxfordſhire, was not ſo happy in being waſhed by the ſwift-gliding Thames, nor yet in being ſituated on the ſide of a moſt fruitful hill, as in the reſidence of Dr. Wakefield there; whoſe good ſenſe, and benevolence of heart, had a peculiar efficacy on the manners of the whole neighbourhood——who were his

parishioners. He had been now twenty years in possession of the living, and was in the commission of the peace. His affluent circumstances, (for besides two considerable livings, he had a paternal estate) enabled him to do a great deal of good; and a temper remarkably compassionate, disposed him to seize every opportunity of reliving distress.

He had been a widower ten years, when his only remaining child, a daughter, was just turned of seventeen. Here centered all his best earthly affections. In her he loved the image of her mother;—he loved her too for her own virtues. No pains had been spared in her education, nor were any advantages towards compleating it lost upon Maria, whose accomplishments, in person and mind, were every day improving.

There was once a son too, who, had he lived, would have been near twenty years old, and must have considerably lessened Maria's share of parental affection—But it pleased Providence to disappoint the Doctor's sanguine hopes, when they had risen to a great height, by a fixed and well-digested plan for his establishment in life.

Although the Doctor's house was the seat of plenteous hospitality, his intimate acquaintance were limited to a small number. Mr. Wroughton, a facetious old gentleman, of an easy fortune, lived about half a mile from him on the one side; and just out of the village, on the other side, was the elegant house of Mr. Tompkins, who, with his wife and family, resided there during the summer months, and was greatly respected by all the neighbourhood. A very happy intimacy subsisted between these agreeable neighbours; but Mr. Wroughton, being always in the country, had rather the preference.

Mr. Charles Kingsley, a young clergyman, who performed the duties of a curacy in the other living

of the Doctor's, about twelve miles diſtant, was almoſt one of his family, ſpending all the time he could diſcreetly ſpare from the ſervices of the pariſh, with Dr. Wakefield, who had a great affection for him. His father had been a friend to the Doctor in his former part of life, and a ſtrict intimacy ſubſiſted between Charles and Maſter Wakefield, from their infancy to the day of his death. They had been at the ſame ſchool before they were ſent to college. Nor was it at all ſtrange if the comely features, the ſpeaking eye, the manifeſt generoſity of mind, which were remarkable in Mr. Kingſley, alſo made ſome impreſſion on the young lady's heart. We cannot, therefore, but think the worthy Doctor rather imprudent in countenancing the frequent viſits of his curate, if he had any averſion to thoſe natural conſequences that muſt neceſſarily ariſe from his being ſo often there. But, perhaps, he had no ſuch averſion; and, though poſſeſſed of a conſiderable fortune, might have laid it down as his plan reſpecting his daughter, to obſerve the workings of her affection, and the virtues of her choice, and leave money out of the queſtion. However this might be, a very ſincere and mutual affection had taken place; and, for two years, it grew, without any direct diſcovery by either of the parties.

It was about three years after the introduction of Peggy Janſon, whom the reader is already acquainted with under the name of the Widow Rigby, into the Doctor's family, and Miſs Wakefield was about her nineteenth year, that a calm evening's walk, in the latter part of which the hitherto ſilent lovers were left alone, had introduced a very dangerous converſation between them. It was in the month of May, the ſweeteſt evening in the month, and in the pleaſanteſt grove in the whole country. Mr. Kingſley's heart, tuned to love, broke forth in its moſt

harmonious

harmonious accents ; nor were the pleaſing ſounds deſtitute of ſympathetic efficacy on the heart of the lovely Maria. She could not, ſhe would not, totally diguiſe the favourable ſentiments ſhe had of him. He exulted in happineſs entirely new, and of the moſt refined nature. They agreed to love each other, for they could not help it ; but agreed too, that it muſt be very carefully concealed from—whom ?—Alas ! from her fond father. It was the firſt concealment from him of any thing that Maria knew. No remarkable change of behaviour betrayed their ſecret; but it was an eaſe to Maria's breaſt, when ſhe had confidence enough in the faithful Peggy, to make her the repoſitory of her fond wiſhes.

The confinement of Dr. Wakefield by the gout, often confined his daughter alſo the greater part of the day, which ſhe ſpent, partly in reading to him, and partly at her needle. Mr. Kingſley, at the invitation of the Doctor, very often made a third in this party, and, by the ſenſible livelineſs of his converſation, and the reſpectful tenderneſs of his behaviour, diverted his benefactor, at the ſame time that he rivetted more firmly the chains of love. The ſituation of our young friends was however, attended with pain. The conſtraint which they were obliged to put upon themſelves, the fear attending it and the difficulty of getting a few favourable minutes alone, rendered them leſs happy than they were before the diſcovery of each other's heart. But the chief uneaſineſs to both aroſe from the principles of virtue. Maria could not but condemn herſelf for giving ſo much encouragement to Mr. Kingſley's paſſion. while her father was ignorant of the declaration he had made to her. And he could not pacify his mind on the reflection that he was abuſing the hoſpitality and benevolence of his beſt friend, by an attachment which he could not even hope would be approved of.

The

The Doctor was taking his nap one afternoon, when Mr. Kingſley came on a viſit there, and found Miſs Wakefield alone; and to the agony of his heart found her in tears. He could not reſt without knowing why ſhe ſhed them, if it might poſſibly be in his power to relieve her. She aſſured him, without reſerve, that he had no ſmall ſhare in the cauſe of her diſtreſs——that ſhe had been thinking of what had paſſed between them at various times, without her father's knowing any thing of it——and what would be the conſequence, if he ſhould hear of it by any accident? "Indeed, Mr. Kingſley," ſaid the lovely maid, "I cannot but think it will be beſt for us to "avoid each other's company as much as poſſible, "for there is no proſpect of happineſs for us toge-"ther."

Mr. Kingſley was ſtruck all of an heap, by a propoſal that raiſed every painful paſſion in his breaſt; and, for a conſiderable time could not ſpeak a word. At length he found utterance. "To leave you, to "be ſeparated from you, my dear Miſs Wakefield, "it is death; and of my own accord to avoid your "company!——it will be ſelf-murder No; it is "true, I have been guilty of preſumption, in the in-"dulgence of my wiſhes——I did not intend they "ſhould have ever broken ſilence; but they are "now known to you; and the loveliеſt of women "will excuſe me, if I yet hope the diſcovery was "not diſpleaſing to her."

"Mr. Kingſley," ſaid ſhe, "you have known "my mind too well; I could not totally conceal it; "nor is it, can it be altered. But to what purpoſe, "Sir, will our farther acquaintance be? As it would "be madneſs in you to make any propoſal to my fa-"ther, ſo it will be very diſhonourable to us both "to continue a private correſpondence on a ſubject "uppermoſt, I fear, in both our hearts.—Where "can it end?"

There

There was ſo much truth in this, that Mr. Kingſley could make no ſatisfactory reply to it. The tears ſtarted afreſh into Maria's eyes, and his were at once infected. They wept heartily together; and the reſult of one quarter of an hour's converſation afterwards was, that he conſented to ſhorten and decreaſe his viſits gradually, that nothing might be ſuſpected, and make trial of the efficacy of abſence towards their relief.

It was the preſſing ſolicitations of the young lady that forced him to this; and he took leave of her in the evening, after he had ſpent a few hours with the Doctor, with a heart beyond meaſure abſorbed in grief. Maria excuſed herſelf from ſupper, on account of a violent head-ach. She retired to her chamber, and poured her griefs into the compaſſionate boſom of Peggy, who conſoled her to the beſt of her power.

A fortnight paſſed in the moſt painful feelings of mortified paſſions, before Mr Kingſley returned. Maria had concealed the uneaſineſs of her heart, by a countenance as placid as ſhe could put on before her father; but happening to be with him in the parlour when the young curate arrived, her ſudden change of colour, and a ſort of confuſion in her manner which the old gentleman could not but obſerve, gave him ſuſpicions on this head, which he did not chuſe to expreſs; while his daughter, pretending illneſs, and retiring, thought herſelf wholly unſuſpected.

The Doctor made no alteration in his conduct to Mr. Kingſley, but requeſted the favour of his company for a few days, to aſſiſt him in the tranſcribing ſome pieces which he intended for the preſs. Accordingly, the next day they ſat down to this buſineſs.

During the Doctor's uſual retirement after dinner, Mr. Kingſley indulged himſelf with a ſolitary and

penſive

penſive walk in the gardens; Miſs Wakefield having left the room ſoon after the cloth was removed. He took the path that led to a favourite little temple, erected on a beautiful eminence, which overlooked a great extent of country, but was nevertheleſs, perfectly retired. No ſooner had he opened the door, than he was ſtruck with the moſt pleaſing confuſion at the ſight of Miſs Wakefield, who was reclined on a ſofa, with a book in her hand, and, by the warmth of the weather, and the reſtleſs nights ſhe had lately had, was fallen faſt aſleep. He was about to withdraw; but her favourite little dog, with the moſt friendly ſollicitude for her ſafety, or for his ſatisfaction, awaked her, on the firſt ſight of a companion.

Let the reader imagine, not her ſurprize, but her pleaſure at this incident; perhaps not totally an unexpected one. Let him forgive them that they embraced each other. The reſolution which duty on her part, and gratitude on his, had impoſed on them, had been repented an hundred times on both ſides; and both agreed it was impoſſible to be obſerved. They were only in ſtronger bondage now than ever.

But the principles of duty and gratitude were yet too deeply rooted, to be totally overcome by paſſion. Mr Kingſley reſolved to throw himſelf on the mercy of his benefactor, and intreat the happineſs of his life at his hands. Maria dreaded the conſequence of this, but could not forbid him.

The next morning gave him a favourable opportunity for his purpoſe. He attended the Doctor in his ſtudy. The buſineſs they were engaged in was concluded, and a general converſation took place. The moment poor Kingſley had uttered two unmeaning words towards his purpoſe, his tongue faultered, and his confuſion was viſible.—"You are not well, "Mr. Kingſley," ſaid the Doctor.

"Not

" Not quite, Sir; I am diſordered a little; I will retire.

" No, no—I will ring the bell, and John ſhall bring you ſomething. What will you have?"

" O, Sir," ſaid Mr. Kingſley, on one knee " forgive my preſumption——Let me unburthen my heart to you, and I will be perfectly ſubmiſſive to your deciſion. I have been but too much indulged in your family: and you will be ſhocked, I fear, at my ingratitude, when I preſume to mention Miſs Wakefield's name to you. I have ſeen and converſed, Sir, ſo often with your lovely daughter that——"

" You muſt ſay no more, Mr. Kingſley. I perfectly underſtand you. We will talk of any thing elſe at preſent if you pleaſe. Come," added the old gentleman, " let us walk in the garden a bit; my foot is eaſier than it has been for ſome time."

If Mr. Kingſley had ſome eaſe from having broken the ice, he was racked with the torture of ſuſpence, in an affair more intereſting to him than life. And the Doctor's ſudden interruption had ſomething ſo forbidding, and at the ſame time ſo myſterious and perplexing in it that he could only at one moment imagine diſtant hope, and at the next find abſolute deſpair in it.

They had walked for ſome time, when the ſervant came to inform the Doctor that Mr. Walgrave and his ſon were within: on which the old gentleman went in to his company. They ſtaid dinner, and ſpent the evening; which addition of ſociety, if it did not relieve the oppreſſion of Mr. Kingſley's mind, obliged him to uſe the natural means of diverting his thoughts. The converſation was rather of the gayer ſort, in which the viſitors had the greater ſhare. Mr. Walgrave was a neighbour of the Doctor's— a man of pleaſure: and his ſon a very

very faſhionable modern young gentleman. The attention he paid to Miſs Wakefield all the afternoon, gave no very great ſatisfaction to her, and much leſs to the unhappy Kingſley.

In the morning he roſe from a ſleepleſs bed, and having vented his uneaſineſs to the dew fraught inhabitants of the ſhrúbbery, he met the Doctor and Miſs Wakefield at the breakfaſt table. Fear and diſtreſs ſat viſible on his forehead—Maria was in confuſion. Mr. Kingſley only opened his lips to propoſe returning home; which the Doctor prevented, by ſaying, he would be glad of his company to dinner if he could amuſe himſelf any way in the interim, as he had ſome engagements till then.

On retiring to his ſtudy, he ſent for his daughter, who attended him with a thouſand conflicting thoughts—"Be ſeated, my love," ſaid he, "I have ſomething to chat with you about." She ſeated herſelf in reſpectful down-caſt ſilence, and the Doctor proceeded.

"I have had a propoſal made to me, my dear "that you are greatly intereſted in." Maria's colour was changed to ſcarlet. "You know, Ma-"ria, how much I have ſtudied your happineſs; "and in this affair, as I have an high opi ion of "your diſcretion, I mean to conſult with, not to "command you. If I ſhould ever be obliged to "oppoſe your inclinations, I will never force them "to compliance with any ſcheme of mine. Mr. "Walgrave, my dear, ſpoke to me yeſterday, on "behalf of his ſon: he does you the honour to "think very highly of you, and has made a very "advantageous offer, if you can approve of the "young gentleman. I ſhould ſuppoſe his perſon to "be unexceptionable, and I know his circumſtan-"ces to be ſo. Tell me now, my child, tell me "your firſt thoughts about this propoſal."

While

While the Doctor ſpoke thus to his daughter, his eye was very intently fixed on her countenance: ſhe continued ſilent for ſome time, rolling up the corner of her handkerchief, and, unable to give vent to her firſt thoughts; ſhe at length ventured to put the ſecond in their place.

"I am ſure, papa, you are very kind to me, and I ought to do as you would have me: but—"

The handkerchief became of more real uſe to poor Maria, at the moment this exceptive word "but" had opened the door to numberleſs ideas at once: ſhe wept ſo ſincerely, that the old gentleman could ſcarce refrain from accompanying her. But, on her recovering a little, he intreated her to open her heart freely to him, and to tell him the real cauſe of her diſtreſs at the mentioning this offer of Mr. Walgrave's.

"I am not without objections to it myſelf," ſaid he; "but you muſt frankly tell me every thing that "made you uneaſy, and you ſhall find the ſame in-"dulgence, my child, you ever met with."

"I do not think, Sir, I could ever love Mr. Wal-"grave as I ought to do," replied Maria, a little emboldened by paternal tenderneſs; "and do you "think, Sir, that he is a good man? I have heard "but an indifferent character of him in our neigh-"bourhood as to his morals."

"You are very right, my dear, to make that a "principal conſideration, and the objection is a very "ſolid one: for I believe there is too much founda-"tion for the reports you have heard. But ſuppoſe "he ſhould ſincerely repent and reform—he might "make a good huſband, and his fortune is very con-"ſiderable: ſhould not that have ſome weight with "you, Maria?"

"O Sir," replied ſhe, "you will, I hope, ex-"cuſe me, if I uſe the inſtructions you have given "me, againſt yourſelf now. I have learned to "think meanly of wealth, when it is propoſed as a

"means

" means of happineſs. I hardly can ſuppoſe you
" would perſuade me to truſt in the uncertainty of
" Mr. Walgrave's reformation for the ſake of his
" fortune."

" Well, Maria, I did not mean to perſuade you.
" But I muſt know, and you muſt tell me in the ſin-
" cerity of your heart; have I heard *all* your ob-
" jections, my child?"

This queſtion, put as it was with great empha-ſis and meaning, not a little confuſed Miſs Wake-field again; who began to ſuſpect, what was really true, that her father knew more of her heart than ſhe was aware of. She heſitated, attempted ſome reply, twice; but without power to make one.

" Was it the character of Mr. Walgrave that firſt
" came into your mind, Maria, when I told you of
" this offer; or—let me help you a little—Have
" you not ſeen a more amiable character ſomewhere
" that has no wealth to enhance its value?"

" Oh, my dear papa, forgive me that I have kept
" any thing from you! I will tell you every ſecret
" of my heart, and you ſhall diſpoſe of me as you
" pleaſe. If you are angry with me, I ſhall, in-
" deed, wiſh I had never known Mr. Kingſley!"

" He ſpoke to me yeſterday, Maria. I heard him
" mention your name, and cut him ſhort. I would
" hear no more till I had fairly underſtood the whole
" affair. I ſhould not have admitted his viſits here
" ſo freely, if I had any invincible objections to
" his and your inclinations. But I want to know
" how far matters have gone between you—Do not
" be ſurpriſed, my Maria, I have not the leaſt ſuſ-
" picion of an impropriety in you behaviour: but
" I would know how long it is ſince Mr. Kingſley firſt
" opened his mind to you, and what countenance
" you have given him."

In reply to this, Maria was very frank, and related every circumſtance, not omitting the reſolution they

they had formed, and the motives to it; and concluded with assuring her father, that Mr. Kingsley had ever treated her in the most respectful manner possible. The old gentleman, when he had heard his daughter out, asked her if she had any objection to his sending for Mr. Kingsley now, as he had something to say to him on this head. She had none; but only chose to retire, if he pleased.

It would be much too tedious to relate the particulars of this conversation. The Doctor well knew Mr. Kingsley's circumstances. They were indeed low enough at present; and his only expectation was on the very precarious humour of an old aunt, who had refused long ago to see him, on account of a pique she had entertained against his father She was rich, and very peevish; but, however, the Doctor undertook to use his best efforts towards a reconciliation, and gave Mr. Kingsley assurance of his approbation in the present affair, which should not he said depend on the success of his endeavours with the aunt, however they turned out, for he would give him at least a competency with his daughter; but they must not be in a hurry, he disliked hasty matches and would have them see, at the end of one twelvemonth whether they had that steady and mutual affection which was so essential to the happiness of the marriage state.

No two people were ever more supremely blest than Mr. Kingsley and Maria, when he related to her in the temple sacred to Honour and Love before mentioned, the encouragement he had met with from the best of fathers They spent the afternoon hours there in the most pleasing endearments of virtuous affection; and the old man's heart was itself exhilarated, when he awoke in the consciousness of communicating happiness to the objects he loved.

He the next day wrote a respectful, but determinate answer to Mr. Walgrave, who visited him soon after, but found that the young lady could not

be

be prevailed on to give the ſmalleſt encouragement whatever to his ſon.

Doctor Wakefield, who had countenanced the mutual affection of his daughter and Mr. Kingſley, with the moſt rational proſpect of her happineſs, had determined to try his utmoſt efforts towards a reconciliation with the young gentleman's aunt. He had written to her to D———, in Warwickſhire, where ſhe reſided, repreſenting the worthy character and bright accompliſhments of her nephew, and the great reſpect he appeared to maintain for her; requeſting ſhe would admit the young gentleman to expreſs that reſpect in his own perſon: but the reply which he received was not of the moſt encouraging aſpect; and he therefore thought, if he could have an interview with the old lady, it might be attended with better ſucceſs. To this purpoſe, being now in an eaſy ſtate of health, he undertook the journey with that cheerful aſſiduity which always appeared about him, when engaged in the honourable employment of making peace. But having the additional view of rendering his intended ſon-in-law more eaſy in his circumſtances than he could otherwiſe be, made him more diligent; for he even promiſed himſelf, not only the reſtoration of him to her favour, but ſome ſubſtantial proofs of it, when he ſhould inform her of his intentions concerning his daughter. He conceived it neceſſary, on this occaſion, to appear himſelf the moſt reſpectably that he could, and accordingly put an additional pair to the chariot; and ſet out, intending to ſpend a week with ſome intimate friends in the way, leaving Miſs Wakefield in the moſt agreeable company to her, that ſhe could poſſibly have in his abſence, or perhaps, in his preſence either: For her affection for Mr. Kingſley increaſed on every opportunity of converſation with him. To a woman educated as Miſs Wakefield was, in a variety of uſeful and agreeable knowledge,

knowledge, and poſſeſſed of the unaffected humility which uſually accompanies ſuch an education in a good mind, nothing could be more engaging than the friendſhip of a man of ſenſe; and when the ſenſible friend is a lover too, of a genteel and polite addreſs, reſpectful even in the warmth of affection, and as fond as heart could wish, we cannot wonder at his ſucceſs.

The temple in the garden, which we have ſeveral times mentioned, was the uſual place of retirement for the happieſt of lovers; happieſt, I ſay, becauſe they were in the ſtat e of expectation.

They ſpent many an hour here converſing on the various delightful topics which virtuous love ſuggeſts nor were books occaſionally excluded.

This beautiful little temple, ſacred to Honour and Love, had regular worſhip paid in it to thoſe united deities, by the ſincereſt of their votaries, every afternoon, in the Doctor's abſence.

It was in the month of Auguſt, the weather ſultry, and every thing conduced to render this the moſt acceptable retirement at ſuch a ſeaſon. Mr. Kingſley had put a volume of poems in his pocket; they read; they chatted; they diſcourſed of virtue; of the paſſions; of friendſhip; of Platonic love; and of love, not Platonic.

It was not unnatural for the paſſions to indulge themſelves, on ſuch an occaſion, in actions expreſſive of fondneſs; nor for thoſe expreſſive actions to increaſe the fervor of the paſſions. Mr. Kingſley, though virtuous in principle, though he loved with reverence, yet he was too much exhilarated, to be attentive to his own conduct. Though his manner carried an apology with it, when he tranſgreſſed, and love pleaded for him in the breaſt of his Maria; yet he went ſo far in his ſportive humour, as obliged her to be offended. Her anger confuſed and diſtreſſed him. He repented ſo ſtrongly, that ſhe found

it

it neceſſary to be indulgent, in order to prove that ſhe forgave him. He was comforted—no—he was all rapture. It was but natural that he ſhould trangreſs again, and worſe than before. She rebuked his freedoms with ſobriety, and he ſoberly pleaded their innocence. They did not quarrel in this argument, but dropped it "Oh, my lovely Maria! when will "the tedious hours be flown over that prevent me "from calling you my own? My heart ſinks at the "thought of ſome intervening accident, ſome change "in your father's mind. My aunt may offend him, "and he may be offended with me. Alas! what a "wretch ſhould I then be!"

"You would not be the only wretch," replied Maria.

"Heaven prevent it, my deareſt creature," ſaid the youth, "that any thing ſhould make you wretch-"ed. But alas! this ſuſpence—theſe long months "that muſt paſs firſt."

They ſat ſilent for a time; his eyes expreſſed what his lips dare not utter. Maria underſtood their meaning, by the ſimple dictates of nature. He ſeized her hand, and ſaluted it with too much ardor. She propoſed a walk in the gardens, but he urged that the heat was too great. They ſtaid where they were. The conflict raiſed in Mr. Kingſley's mind, between his virtue and his paſſions, was almoſt at an end. He had pleaded for innocent freedoms before, he found very *ready* arguments now in favour of his utmoſt wiſhes. They had often and often plighted their troth before the face of Heaven; of what conſequence were mere forms? Maria ſeemingly ſtarted with ſurprize at this reaſoning; ſhe reaſoned in reply to it, inſtead of leaving the bewitching ſpot. She was angry, ſhe wept: nor could the youth refrain from dropping a tear on her lovely face, while he attempted to wipe away hers with

the

the lip of tender affection. She recovered from her diſtreſs, on his ſeeming to recover his reaſon. But, alas! how eaſily we deceive ourſelves!—Mr. Kingſley was ſeized with an unuſual gloom, which all her little arts could not diſpel. He dropped a doubt of her love to him—Maria was grieved; ſhe was only conſcious of too much. She could not refrain from aſſurances, nor from tokens of it, that brought him to himſelf again, or rather, carried him again away in the flow of his paſſions. He could not be ſatisfied of the truth of it fully, while ſhe withſtood the *juſt* reaſonings he had urged before; and poor Maria was reduced to a freſh trial, with much leſs fortitude than ever. She was brought to the combat again with diminiſhed forces.

During theſe critical minutes, the two deities, to whoſe union the temple was dedicated, was thrown into confuſion.——They had taken different ſides on the behalf of their votaries. *Honour* had exerted her utmoſt power for their preſervation, and Love pretended to aſſiſt her: but he was a traitor. He got full poſſeſſion alone of one heart, and Honour had only a corner left in the other. She ſaw herſelf ſlighted, and deſerted; who, alone, could afford protection againſt the wily inſinuations of Love! She remained a long time maintaining an unequal fight, and, at laſt, was forced to retire reluctantly, and leave the field open to the enemy. The conqueror improved this victory, and took entire poſſeſſion of the heart which honour had left vacant.

Dangerous and dreadful was the charming, the tender Maria's ſituation, now. Would the vows of any other man have had ſuch an effect on her heart, but too ſuſceptible of the ſofteſt emotions, the moſt bewitching paſſions? No, ſhe could not doubt the ſincerity of her beloved Charles: his word had ever borne the ſtamp of truth, his aſſeverations were the

reſult of untainted honeſty. By the unbounded dependance ſhe had on him, the leſs ſhe had on herſelf; and even the good opinion ſhe entertained of his truth and morality, led her to the commiſſion of an immoral action. This was not a time to reaſon. Her heart, long convinced of his good qualities, and how worthy he was to be loved, now only bore teſtimony in his behalf; and her heated imagination brightened the glowing colours. She fell ——the lovely Maria fell, the victim of as pure a paſſion as ever burned in a female breaſt

Triumph not in her fall, ye daughters of ſhame! Exult not in her ruin, ye whoſe feet are acquainted with the paths of iniquity! Long and ſevere was the conflict before ſhe was overcome; great and powerful was the temptation that drew her devious ſteps from the paths of virtue. Her reaſon was lulled aſleep by the enchantments of paſſion; and uncontaminated was her mind, which conſented not to her guilt.

For the children of innocence and virtue, for the ſportive daughters of youth, for the guiltleſs and unexperienced maidens, whoſe hearts, warmed with the gentleſt of all paſſions, languiſh for the completion of their wiſhes, this picture is drawn and diſplayed; to them this leſſon is addreſſed. Hence let them learn that, to fly from an enemy they cannot reſiſt, is the only means to eſcape a defeat. To play on the brink of a precipice, is to ſport with danger: and to parly with a lover in the hour of fondneſs, is to provoke ruin. The arrogant heart, that contemns a foe, ſhall be humbled; but the caution of wiſdom will ſhun the unequal engagement. The pride of honour, the conſciouſneſs of virtue, and even the frozen veil of chaſtity, have been all found inſufficient to repel the aſſaults of love, unaſſiſted by PRUDENCE, unaided by DISCRETION.

Ye venerable, ye honoured dames, be ever present in the hour of danger, and guard the white-bosomed virgins of our affection in the moments of temptation. Let PRUDENCE take off the magic and fallacious masque from the incitements of dishonourable love, and shew the monster in its proper hideous shape. Let the mild hand of DISCRETION moderate and repress the flame of desire, and set bounds to the invasions of unrestrained inclination. So shall your days be blessed with peace, the beauteous and chaste companions of your happy husbands; so shall your matron honour be held in reverence, and your children boast of the virtues of their mothers.

Soon did this couple awake from their trance; soon did the delusive mist of passion vanish before the returning ray of reason, and their false happiness fled them also. Maria, but too sensible of what had passed, and ashamed of herself, broke from the arms of her lover, who yet held her to his throbbing breast. Her imagination represented to her, in the most striking and forcible manner, her own crime, and the dreadful consequences of it. While her heart yet panted with rapture, her eyes was suffused with tears; and the murmurs of love were stifled by the sighs of agony and affliction—— So close do remorse and repentance follow on the steps of guilt. Even in Kingsley's bosom all was not quiet. Conscious of the part he had acted, the distress of his beloved Maria planted a dagger in his breast. Not her for listening and yielding to his temptations, did he condemn; but himself for offering them. He dreaded to look on himself in the light of a betrayer, yet his wounded conscience told him he was no better. He trembled to turn his eyes on what had passed, and sincerely did he lament his own weakness and want of resolution to oppose the

force of thoſe paſſions, which only ſerved to conduct him to miſery. But he had no time to indulge thoſe bitter reflections——The weeping Maria ſat by his ſide, and refuſed to be comforted. Not a tear did ſhe ſhed, but he reproached himſelf as the cauſe of it. Not a ſigh burſt from her aching breaſt that did not pierce his. He ſtrove with the accents of the tendereſt love, to compoſe her, to reaſſure her with confidence, and convince her of his affection by the moſt ſolemn vows. The bluſhing Maria ſuffered herſelf to be perſuaded of his truth and ſincerity for her, which then it would have been madneſs and horror but to have formed a doubt of. They quitted the temple, and returned to the houſe, in a ſtate of uneaſineſs and trouble; where, to give her all the ſatisfaction in his power, he betrothed himſelf to her in the moſt ſolemn manner.

BOOK III.

DR. Wakefield, on his return from his expedition to Warwickſhire, brought very agreeable news to Mr. Kingſley: he had ſuceeded with the old Lady to the utmoſt of his expectations.

It ſeems that Mrs. Parkington's prejudice againſt her brother, aroſe from his marrying a young woman of mean birth and no fortune, by which her pride of family honour was ſo touched, that ſhe would never ſee him: and when misfortune trod on the heels of extravagance and reduced him conſiderably, ſhe was ſtill more embittered againſt him. But he had been dead ſeveral yeais; and when the Doctor viſited her,

every

very thing contributed to give him ſucceſs: his appearance was reſpectable, his converſation very polite and agreeable, and the propoſals he made were generous. "He would give with his daughter, four thouſand pounds on the day of marriage, and leave her all he had; if Mrs. Parkington would only advance the young gentleman two thouſand pounds, and conſider him in her will in proportion to his good behaviour."

She conſented to more than this; ſhe would equal his daughter's fortune: and as Mr. Kingſley was her only near relation. ſhe propoſed, upon the very favourable repreſentation the Doctor made of him to leave him reſiduary legatee, after a few inconſiderable legacies.

This happy turn in Mr. Kingſley's favour, no doubt gave him great pleaſure. It alſo added a little to the ſatisfaction of Miſs Wakefield. But their happineſs now, had no little alloy. Honour, ſlighted as ſhe had been, could not forſake her proper reſidence in the breaſt of the lovely Maria; but took ample revenge there for the affront that had been put upon her: and if it had not been for the friendly conſolations which the rival deity adminiſtered, that breaſt had ſuffered too much to be borne.

In plain terms, Miſs Wakefield was truly uneaſy in the reflections on her own imprudence: nor could any thing have conſoled her, but the faithful affection which appeared in every word and action of Mr. Kingſley. He was indeed leſs happy himſelf than he had been, but not leſs fond; and relieved the dejected Maria, by the reſpect and delicacy of his behaviour, from the painful reproaches of her heart, which had not now that ſelf-complacence that ariſes from conſcious virtue. They were indeed, undoubtedly, married in the ſight of God; but it is the duty of genuine virtue to conform to the juſt

and reaſonable inſtitutions of men: nor could a mind like Mr. Kingſley's be inſenſible of one circumſtance which involved him in real guilt; viz. That the paſſions which had overcome him, would have had the like ſucceſs in any other caſe, and it is probable would have even drawn him into murder and adultery had the accidents been the ſame.

Miſs Wakefield had a few days leiſure to calm her mind before her father's arrival: ſo that her countenance did not betray any ſecret to him: but, with her full approbation, Mr. Kingſley now urged the Doctor for his conſent to their ſpeedy union. He at length complied, and every thing was put in forwardneſs for their receiving the ſacred ſanction to their loves in a month's time.

While theſe preparations were making, to the great relief of Miſs Wakefield, Mr. Kingſley, attended by a ſervant of the Doctor's, went to pay a viſit to his aunt, who received him at firſt with ceremony: but his graceful figure, his reſpectful deportment, and a livelineſs of converſation in which he excelled, ſoon opened him a paſſage to the old lady's heart, and ſhe gave him very cordial aſſurances of her friendſhip. He ſtaid three days with her, impatient to return to the ſole object of all his affections, who counted the minutes of his abſence with an anxious heart.

Three weeks of the appointed month were worn away, when Mr. Kingſley received a letter from his mother. She had reſided in Lancaſhire ever ſince the death of her huſband, and Mr. Kingſley had regularly correſponded with her, altho we did not think proper to introduce her to the reader till now.

He had made her long ago acquainted with his happy connections and favourable proſpects: and ſhe ſubmitted to his own prudence and diſcretion e-

very

ery thing concerning them. Mr. Kingſley had left er in no very proſperous circumſtances. But he had eft her a *ſon*. Young Kingſley had been ſupported n his education, partly by his father's care, and artly by Doctor Wakefield himſelf; who was, as efore mentioned, a friend to the family. Charles was a frequent viſitor at the Doctor's in thoſe early days, and an intimate companion of that ſon, whom Doctor Wakefield loved extravagantly, and loſt as before related: and ever after he had the affection of a father for young Kingſley.

To this was owing the partiality for him that muſt have appeared ſtrange to the reader, while he knew him only as the Doctor's curate. The income of this curacy was fifty pounds per annnm. Now if the Doctor had a very warm friendſhip for Mr. Kingſley, when he made him this proviſion, we may ſuppoſe it was not leſſened by a diſcovery he accidentally made, after the young gentleman had enjoyed it two years: which was, that twenty-five of this fifty pounds regularly went into Lancaſhire, for the more comfortable ſupport of his poor mother. Such filial duty and affection, gave him the higheſt place in Doctor Wakefield's eſteem, of any man he knew: and pointed him out to his thoughts as a mueh happier match for his daughter, than the firſt nobleman in the kingdom, if poſſeſſed of the common principles of modern life.

The letter Mr. Kingſley had from his mother, acquainted him with her being in a very bad ſtate of health; that ſhe was thought to be in ſome danger; that Mr. Willoughby, her landlord, had given her warning to quit his houſe, and threatened her with a diſtreſs for ſome arrears of rent, which ſhe had not yet been able to pay. She entreated him to come over, if poſſible, though it were but for a little time, to try what might be done to prevent this additional affliction.

This was no ſmall trial to the amiable couple: but upon Mr. Kingſley's ſhewing the Doctor his mother's letter, he would not ſuffer any thing to hinder his going immediately: and beſides bearing the expence of his journey, he furniſhed him very ſufficiently with the means of removing all his mother's difficulties: at the ſame time, he deſired, if Mrs. Kingſley ſhould be better, and able to take the journey, ſhe might leave her houſe totally, and come back with her ſon; aſſuring her of a welcome reception in his family.

It was impoſſible for Miſs Wakefield to oppoſe this expedition with any decorum, if ſhe were ſo inclined: but we can apologize for her divided mind. Humanity and compaſſion reigned there: but the delay which this event would occaſion, and the peculiar reaſons ſhe had againſt any delay, raiſed a very painful conflict in her.

Mr. Kingſley had made a propoſal to have the ceremony performed before he went, but it was not ſo agreeable to the old gentleman's deliberate way of proceeding: and as he might return in a fortnight, it would make only a ſmall difference.

It was a very gloomy evening that the two anxious lovers ſpent together, before the morning of Mr. Kingſley's departure. The poſſibility of very fatal accidents happening in the courſe of ſo long a journey, was raiſed in Maria's foreboding heart to almoſt a certainity. She had no doubts of his fidelity and affection; but a thouſand fears for his ſafety, which were rendered the ſtronger, by reaſon of her apprehenſions for herſelf, in caſe any thing ſhould ſeparate them. He did his beſt to diſpel thoſe fears; aſſured her he would take the utmoſt care of himſelf for her ſake. At this time a thought came into his head, which, if executed, he imagined would tend to calm the anxious agitated mind of his beloved Maria. He propoſed it to her, and at his earneſt re-

queſt

queſt ſhe complied with it. He then took up a Prayer Book which lay before them on the table, (after calling in the faithful Peggy to be a witneſs) and in form went through the whole marriage ceremony each in turn repeating the reſponces: nor did he forget to place the ring on her finger as directed in the rubrick. When this was over he ſaluted her his eternally beloved wife; and with the utmoſt tenderneſs beſought her on his account to compoſe her mind, with a reliance on Divine Providence.

She loved him too well to be gratified by ſeeing him uneaſy; and they took leave of each other overnight with an aſſumed cheerfulneſs on each ſide, that required no little art to put on, and much more philoſophy to realize.

The firſt week of Mr. Kingſley's abſence, her whole conſolation aroſe from the three letters ſhe received from him, and the hopes of ſeeing him in eight days from the end of it. Her anxiety for his return could only be encreaſed by her melancholy apprehenſions of betraying, in a natural way, the conſequences of her indiſcretion. A thouſand diſtreſſing fears ſeized her, and they were doubled when the poſt failed to bring her an expected letter, four days after the laſt ſhe had.

The old gentleman obſerved her trouble, and comforted her as well as he could. "To-morrow "ſhe might hear from him; it was no uncommon "thing for letters to miſcarry." To-morrow came, but only to encreaſe Maria's anxiety. The next day exchanged that anxiety for perfect anguiſh.

It might perhaps be a kindneſs to our tender-hearted readers to drop this ſtory here; but painful as ſcenes of woe may be, they are ſometimes more uſeful to us than even *the merry heart which doth good like a medicine.*

Mr.

Mr. Kingſley did not write, nor did he return at the expected time.

It is impoſſible to conceive what paſſed in Miſs Wakefield's breaſt. She could not ſuppoſe that any thing but death had prevented him, and this thought left very little life in in her. Her fond father could not any longer aſſiſt her by favourable conjuctures: but was himſelf apprehenſive of ſome very fatal accident. A few days diſtreſs, ſuch as the young lady endured, were enough to have injured a much ſtrong conſtitution: ſhe ſunk under it, and was confined to her bed with a fever, which had her ſuſpence continued might have coſt her life: but ſhe was relieved by certainty, melancholy as it was.

During Miſs Wakefield's illneſs, as her father was ſitting by her bed-ſide adminiſtering every conſolation in his power to her afflicted heart, he was called out by the maid ſervant, who informed him that John was come back. This was the man who had attended Mr. Kingſley on his journey, and had lived many years in the family.

The Doctor went down, and ordering John into the parlour, began his enquiries after Mr. Kingſley.

"O Sir," ſaid John, "have you never received "the letter I wrote?"

"No, John."

"I have a melancholy ſtory to tell you then, "Sir: and I hardly know where to begin."

"But—where did you leave Mr. Kingſley? Is he "coming?"

"Oh, Sir," replied John, the tears flowing faſt down his cheeks, "my worthy young maſter will "never come any more."

"What! he is not dead, John! Is he?"

"It is too true, Sir; indeed he is: I was by him "to the laſt minute."

"Thy

" Thy will be done, Father of Mercy," cried the old gentleman, lifting up both his hands to heaven. " But what will become of my poor child!"

He wept at the thought of her ſufferings; but compoſing himſelf, deſired to have a circumſtantial account of every thing.

" My young maſter wrote to you, Sir, I ſuppoſe " about our journey to his mother's and that the La- " dy was not well enough to think of coming back " with us; but as ſhe was not worſe, ſhe did hope " to come ſoon. But when ſhe knew that my young " maſter had put off the marriage to come to ſee her " ſhe was uneaſy at it, and would not have him ſtay " with her above three or four days on any account. " So, after he had ſettled his affairs, and ſtaid till ſhe " almoſt forced him away, we ſet out on our return " home. We met with no accident the firſt day, " though it is a very rough ugly country about the " weſt ſide of Yorkſhire: but the next afternoon, " when we were got as far as Leeds, about duſk, my " maſter had refreſhed himſelf a little, and reſolved " to get forward another ſtage that night; though " we had rode fifty miles at leaſt. I would fain have " perſuaded him to ſtay; but he was in a very great " hurry to get home, and would go at all adventures. " So, Sir, we ſet out when it was almoſt dark, and " there was no moon, and the weather very foul. " My maſter rode pretty faſt; and whether his horſe " ſtarted at any thing, or ſtumbled, I could not tell; " but I found a ſudden ſtop, and heard him cry out, I " ſuppoſe as he fell; for I jumped off my horſe im- " mediately, and found him on the ground not able " to move or ſpeak. O, Sir, nobody can think " what miſery I felt at that moment: I knew not " what to do. I endeavoured to lift him up, but he " was like a dead corpſe for weight. However with " ſome difficulty, I removed him to the ſide of the

" road;

" road; and finding ſome ſigns of life about him, I
" rubbed his face from the dirt, and endeavoured to
" get ſome water in my hat to give him to drink.
" At length he came a little to himſelf, and was only
" juſt able to ſay, 'Get me to ſome houſe.'

" I looked all about very earneſtly to ſee if I could
" perceive any light, but there was only one at a
" great diſtance acroſs the fields: and juſt then I
" heard ſome horſes on the road, and they ſoon came
" up. I enrreated the people to ſtop and help me.
" They told me of a little public houſe not far off on
" the road, and very kindly aſſiſted me to carry him
" to it. He complained of his head, which appear-
" ed to be very much hurt, and bled a great deal.
" There was no ſurgeon to be had nearer than Leeds
" ſo I got one of the men to go there immediately,
" and bring the beſt ſurgeon he could meet with.
" He returned with one in a little more than two
" hours and a half. When he examined his head,
" he looked very blank: and after he had done
" what he thought needful, calling me out of the
" room, told me, that my maſter was in a great deal
" of danger by the fracture in his ſkull; and aſking
" me his name and where he lived, adviſed me if
" poſſible to ſend to his friends immediately, though
" it was very doubtful whether he could live till
" they arrived. He ordered him to be kept very
" quiet and not let him ſpeak much if he ſhould
" think himſelf able."

" I deſired him to give all the attendance in his
" power, and aſſured him he would be ſatisfied for
" any trouble he took. He promiſed to return
" very early in the morning, and ſtaid till I had
" got a pen, ink, and paper, and wrote a few lines
" to you, Sir; but I find you never received them:
" and indeed I was ſurpriſed that I neither ſaw nor
" heard any thing from you; but I ſuppoſe in my
" confuſion I made ſome miſtake in the direction.

" I ſat

" I ſat up with Mr. Kingſley all night: he was in
" great pain, had no reſt, and talked a great deal
" to himſelf for all that I could do to prevent him.
" When the ſurgeon came in the morning, he told
" me he had no hopes of him; that he would not
" live four and twenty hours more. I was full of
" grief and diſtreſs. He lay more compoſed for the
" moſt part of the the day, but was very bad in the
" evening: he talked about you and my young Lady
" with ſuch earneſtneſs—that I was ſure he was not
" to be kept alive if quietneſs was neceſſary for him.
" About ten o'clock he grew more calm, but com-
" plained of his head; He called to me a little after,
" and told me he knew he ſhould die, and very
" quietly gave me directions what to do. When he
" had laid very ſtill for near an hour after this, he
" jumped ſuddenly up in bed, crying out, 'O Ma-
" ria, my loved, my loſt Maria,' and then ſunk
" down again as lifeleſs as a ſtone.

" When I ſaw that all was over, I could not ſtir
" for grief. The people of the houſe dragged me
" out of the room, and perſuaded me to get a few
" hours reſt, which I endeavoured to do; but ſoon
" got up again.

" My maſter had deſired that I would ſee him
" buried at Leeds, and leave it to you to write to
" his mother, and that I ſhould go home as ſoon as
" I could afterwards. I had ſecured his money
" at his firſt being put to bed, but found there was
" not like to be enough to pay all expences, with-
" out great frugality. I went over to Leeds to the
" ſurgeon, who adviſed me as to the circumſtances
" of his funeral: and as to himſelf he would take
" nothing of me. This left me enough for all
" the other purpoſes: and after I had paid the laſt
" duties to my dear young maſter, I ſet out with the
" horſes to come home."

The

The Doctor attended to John's melancholy ſtory without interrupting him, and ſat a long while ſilent after he had finiſhed. He had known affliction before, but never felt more than at preſent. He loved Mr. Kingſley very much, but his daughter was now his chief concern. Whether to communicate the dreadful tidings to her or not was a great perplexity to him. But when he had duly weighed this in his mind, he determined with as much caution and tenderneſs as poſſible to inform her of Mr. Kingſly's death.

When the Doctor went up again to ſee his daughter, he found her doſing; and therefore, leaving orders to be called when ſhe awoke, he retired to his ſtudy; where he gave free vent to the diſtreſs of his mind, in very fervent ſupplications to the divine Being for himſelf and his child. When he was informed of her being awake, and deſiring to ſee him, he went immediately to her chamber; and finding her very compoſed, thought it would be wiſeſt to ſay nothing on the afflicting ſubject, unleſs ſhe was herſelf to revive it.

She ſoon enquired of him, whether he had heard any thing yet. He continued ſilent for a time, not ſeeming to regard her queſtion. "Then he is "dead!" ſaid ſhe. I thought ſo from the firſt; "for he could not, he would not, deſert me, if he "were living

"Compoſe yourſelf, my love," ſaid her father; "you will be the worſe for thinking on this ſub-"ject: when you get a little better, we will talk "about it."

"Oh father!" ſaid ſhe, "I cannot help think-"ing on it: but I am much more compoſed than I "was; and ſhall not be worſe, if you tell me all. I "am ſure you know ſomething about him: do tell "me all. I have given him up: I am reſigned. "But what have you heard, Sir?"

"Can

" Can you, my Maria, ſubmit calmly to the will " of our eternal Sovereign; even ſuppoſing that " will ſhould be to ſeparate you; and that he has " called Mr. Kingſley to greater bleſſedneſs than " any on earth? May God Almighty comfort you, " my child! it is beyond my power."

She fainted, and was long before ſhe recovered. The old man wept compaſſionately over her; and his tears of love were balm to her heart. She was, indeed, ſhocked on the tranſition from ſuſpicion to certainty. But her grief had vented itſelf already; and ſhe turned comforter to her afflicted father.

Not to confine the reader too long in the chamber of the afflicted, it will be ſufficient to inform him, that Miſs Wakefield's fever, though it grew worſe for two days after this, yet in about a fortnight ſhe was ſo well recovered, as to ſit up the greateſt part of the day, to the great comfort of her father.

But her grief had food which he knew not of.

Poor Maria had even entertained hopes, on a confirmation of her worſt apprehenſions, that her illneſs would befriend her, in ſecreting for ever the fatal effects of her unwatchful love. But this was not to be: And ſhe had no other proſpect of concealing them, but that her great weakneſs ſeemed to promiſe a full releaſe from all her troubles in a few months.

The faithful Peggy Janſon, who was now become Mrs. Rigby, in the arms of her huſband loſt nothing of her affection for her miſtreſs. She heard of her illneſs, and attended her during the continuance of it with a care and attention that demonſtrated her regard. Frequently did ſhe endeavour to diſſipate the gloom that hung over Maria's ſpirits, and which was viſible in every action and look.

The young Lady, at length, gave vent to her diſtreſs, and informed her of her condition. The recollection of paſt ſcenes, when ſhe ventured to unburthen

burthen her heart of this painful ſecret, greatly oppreſſed her; but yet ſhe was eaſier on having a faithful friend to adviſe with. Mrs. Rigby comforted her as much as ſhe could; aſſuring her, that ſhe would find ſome means, if poſſible, to have her ſecret kept from all the world but themſelves.

"I do not know," ſaid Maria, "what can poſ-
"ſibly be done: but, if I thought my dear father
"would not be more diſtreſſed at it than he has
"been already, and that he would not deſpiſe and
"hate me; I could almoſt wiſh that he knew it:
"His advice muſt be of the utmoſt ſervice."

Mrs. Rigby rather diverted her from thinking of this: But revolving it afterward in her mind, ſhe concluded, that there could be no danger of her father's anger, in this critical ſtate of his daughter's health: and as to its giving him freſh diſtreſs, ſhe had ſo high an opinion of his fortitude and patience, that ſhe reſolved to venture on informing him, though with proper caution, of the whole affair, without letting Miſs Wakefield feel any pain of ſuſpenſe by knowing her intention.

Accordingly ſhe took the firſt opportunity of ſpeaking to him; very prudently introducing her ſtory with ſome affectionate praiſes of her young Lady's virtue and patience; lamenting her very weak ſtate of health, and fears leſt ſhe ſhould go into a decline. Theſe werecircumſtances that brought up all the good doctor's affections to her aſſiſtance; and as he was in the beſt diſpoſition imaginable, when Mrs. Rigby told him, there was one unhappy circumſtance which greatly endangered the young Lady while it lay working in her mind; as ſhe was afraid and aſhamed he ſhould know it; but that it was better to break it to him at once. The mention of ſhame led the old man at once into the ſecret; and,

in

in a moment, he reflected on his own imprudence, in putting two young people into ſuch a temptation. He was more confirmed in this ſelf-blame, on hearing all the particulars: and, though he could not but be diſpleaſed at the impropriety of their behaviour, and would have been full of indignation, had Mr. Kingſley been living; yet now his heart was ſoftened, and he conſulted with great patience and tenderneſs what could beſt be done for his daughter's comfort and her reputation.

However, he was rejoiced to hear that the ceremony of the church had been attended to; which he thought mended the matter greatly, and the more eſpecially, as being read by a perſon in holy orders.

Mrs. Rigby made a propoſal which greatly pleaſed the old gentleman: it was this; that as her huſband had found it neceſſary to leave their little cottage, and had ſo advantageous an offer with Mr. Turnbull, they would retire, if the Doctor pleaſed, to Northamptonſhire; and Miſs Wakefield might, without any ſuſpicion, viſit them for change of air and variety: and when ſhe ſhould be brought to bed, if he approved of it, ſhe would undertake the care of the child; and it ſhould be called by her own name.

This ſcheme, with ſome improvements, was determined on; and Mrs. Rigby now begged one favour of the doctor; which was, that he would ſave his daughter ſome of the ſhame and vexation of appearing as a criminal in his eyes, by viſiting her now, and comforting her himſelf with aſſurances of his compaſſion and love for her, at the very time when he ſhould diſcover that he knew all.

This the old gentleman complied with in a way that did more honour to his paternal humanity, than any rigid anger could have done to his virtue;

and

and it was the means that contributed more than any other to reſtore Miſs Wakefield to health, and to ſome peace of mind.

Nevertheleſs, the various ſcenes which ſhe had once beheld with ſo much delight, became now the melancholy remembrancers of her unhappineſs. The well-intended viſits of conſolation from their reſpectable neighbourhood, were burthenſome and painful; and, beſides this, it would ſoon become neceſſary for her to retire. The Doctor, therefore, very conſiderately, propoſed to ſpend the winter in London, and, for that purpoſe, ſent honeſt John thither, with a commiſſion to look for a neat ſmall houſe, ready furniſhed, in ſome private ſtreet at the weſt end of the town. John ſucceeded to his maſter's wiſh, and, in three months after the unfortunate accident, they ſet out for London.

Mr. Rigby removed to a part of Northamptonſhire, about thirty miles diſtant, and was furuiſhed, partly at the Doctor's expence, with a little, convenient houſe, in a private part of the counry; and, in a ſhort time, Miſs Wakefield removed from London, to Mr. Rigby's.

Now it happened very favourably for Miſs Wakefield, that Mrs. Rigby herſelf had lain in a month before her viſitor came, and was prepared to nurſe both boys at once. The midwife had been properly inſtructed with a ſtory concerning the young lady, as near the truth as poſſible, with this only addition, of Mr. Kingſley having been privately married to her, againſt the conſent of his aunt. But ſhe went not in the name of Kingſley, but in that of Rigby, as a relation of Mr. Rigby's.

Every thing was ſnug and ſecret. A charming boy, the very image of his father, revived a thouſand ideas of him in her mind, and became the ob-

ject of her fondeſt affection. She ſtaid two months; and then, with the moſt painful reluctance ſeparated herſelf from the dear pledge of her moſt unfortunate love. But Prudence required it, as the ſacrifice of atonement for the offence committed againſt her honour.

A few months after Miſs Wakefield's return home, Mrs. Rigby had the misfortune to loſe her own little boy, and had then no other care than little Tommy, who thrived exceedingly. She kept up a regular correſpondence with her young lady, although with caution as to any expreſſions that might diſcover a ſecret ſo important to Miſs Wakefield, in caſe a letter ſhould miſcarry.

Her huſband had got a recommendation to 'Squire Turnbull, with whom he worked in his profeſſion; and beſides his income here, Dr. Wakefield had ſettled a very pretty annuity on them for both their lives, in compenſation for the care and trouble they would have, as parents of his little grandſon. The old gentleman ſeveral times paid a viſit to them, along with his daughter, as ſecretly as could be, and made them many handſome preſents at each of theſe viſits. Mr. and Mrs. Rigby were ſufficiently engaged to their intereſt already, by the remembrance of the happy days they had ſpent in the Doctor's family; but ſo much kindneſs and reſpect as was now paid them, ſerved to confirm them in their fidelity.

It was by means of her huſband's reſidence in Mr. Turnbull's family, that Mrs. Rigby became acquainted with Mrs. Wilkins, of whoſe marriage, and removal into Berkſhire, we have already ſpoken. The reader has alſo been informed that Mrs. Rigby became a widow, by her huſband being ſeized with a violent fever, two years after the birth of her adopted ſon. Doctor Wakefield, who was much advanced

ed in years, paid the debt of nature about ſix months before Rigby's deceaſe, and left his daughter poſſeſſed of all his fortune, which was not inconſiderable.

Miſs Wakefield felt this affliction of her father's death very ſincerely; but ſhe had been before in the ſchool of adverſity. Her chief attention, for the laſt two years, had been to alleviate the burthen of her father's infirmites; during which time they lived very recluſe. Immediately upon his death, ſhe began to deliberate on a ſcheme of leaving that neighbourhood, and retiring to ſome diſtant part of the kingdom, if ſhe could prevail with Mrs. Rigby to accompany her. For it was her great ambition, if it could be done without raiſing any ſurmiſes, to have the dear little fellow always under her notice, that ſhe might give the utmoſt attention to his education. But ſome material circumſtances aroſe, to divert her mind from this project.

Mrs. Rigby, with whom ſhe conſulted upon it, in a viſit ſhe made her ſoon after this event, earneſtly diſſuaded her from it, as it would have an extraordinary appearance, for her, without any viſible inducement, to leave her eſtate to the management of ſtrangers, and retire to any diſtant part; and, if they ever were diſcovered by perſons who knew her, a very diſagreeable *explanation* of the cauſe of this retirement might be brought out. Miſs Wakefield was, therefore, perſuaded to lay aſide thethoughts of removing, from theſe, and ſome other prudent conſiderations. But as we are come now to the period at which we began to relate her hiſtory, we ſhall beg of the reader to accompany us to farmer Wilkins's new habitation in Berkſhire, whither, as we mentioned before, ſhe frequently went.

Miſs Wakefield ſtill had a great deſire to quit that part of the country where her father reſided, leſt by

any

any means her unhappy connexion with Mr. Kingſley might have been diſcovered. Though that was next to an impoſſibility, yet ſhe never was the leſt fearful and anxious. Conſcious herſelf of having tranſgreſſed, ſhe had not as yet aſſumed confidence enough to ſuppoſe that the reſt of the world had looked on her as innocent. She therefore wiſhed to go to ſome other place where ſhe was a ſtranger. An opportunity, favourable to her wiſhes, now offered itſelf. A gentleman, from Suffolk, whom ſhe had accidentally become acquainted with ſoon after her father's death, was pleaſed with her; and, having paid his addreſſes to her, ſhe ſeemed inclinable to accept his hand. But, before ſhe would alter her condition, ſhe determined to ſettle her ſon, and make him independent of her if ſhe lived: And from that time never to ſee, or acknowledge him as her ſon. The ſecret of his birth was known to ſo few, that it could never, with any probability, come to her future huſband's ears; and ſhe reſolved, at once, to bury her own ſhame, and, if poſſible, the remembrance of it, by entirely relinquiſhing him to the care of Mrs. Rigby, who determined never to marry, and on whoſe affection for him ſhe could ſafely rely.

This then was the cauſe of the many private conferences which the two women had together; but not being able to accompliſh the deſign of themſelves, the widow, who had the greateſt opinion of farmer Wilkins's good ſenſe and prudence, propoſed it to Miſs Wakefield, to acquaint him with the whole ſtory, and to aſk his advice.

With great reluctance ſhe conſented to this: and after making Wilkins and his wife promiſe ſecrecy in the moſt ſolemn manner, Mrs. Rigby acquainted them with that hiſtory, which, in our own mode and ſtile, we have already delivered to the reader.

When

When the farmer heard what Miſs Wakefield wanted, he offered all the aſſiſtance in his power; and going to conſult with a lawyer, every thing was pruperly adjuſted. Two hundred pounds a year were ſettled upon Thomas Rigby and his heirs for ever, when he arrived at twenty-one; and John Wilkins, with a neighbour, were truſtees.

This grand point being determined, ſhe became a joyful bride, and went with her huſband into Suffolk, where ſhe was free from all thoſe apprehenſions which uſed frequently to torment her at home. She had ſettled every thing to her wiſh, and her heart rejoiced in her fancied ſecurity. But while we think we tread in ſafety, the adder ſtings us; and in the midſt of our air-built notions of happineſs, ruin and deſtruction overtake us. We arm ourſelves, and make the way plain for them: yet the ſhield of integrity ſhall blunt the arrows of misfortune, and the conſciouſneſs of virtue ſhall dull the edge of ſorrow.

BOOK IV.

LITTLE Tommy was now entirely left to the care of Mrs. Rigby, who, on every occaſion, behaved as tenderly to him as his own mother could do. She was a real mother to him, for he knew none other. Mrs. Rigby could not entirely approve the conduct of his mother; this total dereliction of her child ſhe did not like, though

ſhe

ſhe had a good ſettlement by it; and though ſhe had cauſe to be aſhamed of the crime that cauſed his exiſtence, ſhe thought he ſhould not be relinquiſhed for ever. He was ſtill her child, and by a man whom ſhe truly loved: and the widow could not conceive how ſhe could form and execute the reſolution of never ſeeing him again. But the boy was more endeared to her by this treatment, and he repaid her kindneſs by the tendereſt affection.

Within a ſhort time after Mr. Wilkins's removal into Berkſhire, his wife was brought to bed of a daughter; and the next year ſhe crown'd his wiſhes by preſenting him a ſon; and, in two years after that, ſhe had another daughter.

Mrs. Rigby was far from being a uſeleſs branch of the family, and, being very fond of children, rendered herſelf extremely ſerviceable to Mrs. Wilkins in the care of hers. Happily for Tommy, whom we ſhall, upon all future occaſions, ſtile Rigby, there was a very worthy clergyman, near the farmer's, who kept a ſchool. When he was about nine years old he went under his care, and his infancy paſſed away like that of other children. As he attained his twelfth year, his reaſon began to expand itſelf a little, and he gave ſome inſight into his temper and diſpoſition. He was bold and daring, quick and impetuous; awed more by fear of ſhame than puniſhment; haughty to thoſe above him, but gentle and kind to thoſe who were in his power; grateful to an exceſs for any favour conferred, but an injury he never forgot: generous as light, and open as the day, every thing he had was at the ſervice of his companions; but the moment he found one of them guilty of a mean or baſe action, him he ever after avoided, and never could be reconciled to him. Ingenuous in his manner, his round and ruddy face was but the index of his mind; and his fine blue eyes, ſpoke the

tenderneſs

tenderneſs of his heart, which was full of compaſſion. Theſe were the outlines of his temper when a boy, and they were but very little altered when he arrived at manhood. It may here be objected, that it was next to an impoſſibility to find out a child's character : this may be a general rule, but he was an exception to it. Some children develop themſelves ſooner than others ; and it has been ſomewhere remarked, that the female underſtanding ripens much ſooner than the male, and yet, even among girls ſome are more forward than others.

This temper of young Rigby's led him into many ſcrapes. In all ſervices of danger, whether robbing an orchard, which he conſidered as lawful prey, or any other grand enterpriſe of the like nature, he was ſtill the foremoſt, and the honour more than the profit allured him. He was always the friend of the oppeſſed, and when he got a litrle ſtrength was the common protector of the leſſer boys ; this engaged him in many combats with thoſe whoſe power he oppoſed, and, in a ſhort time, he found but few equals, and they declined any engagements with him : it is true, in theſe contentions he frequently brought off a bloody noſe and black eyes, but he gained his point. His maſter had a great affection for him, and he was very attentive to his inſtructions, overlooked ſome peccadilloes in him, that he would have puniſhed in any other boy. One inſtance in which he could not forgive him was this : from the character we have given of Tom, it muſt be ſuppoſed that he was of a ſocial temper, and made ſeveral of thoſe boyiſh attachments which frequently however laſt through life, though built on ſo ſlender a foundation. Tom was as ſincere in his friendſhip as violent in his enmity. Two boys who were his particular friends, engaged him one day at play beyond the ſchool hour, and when they

found

found themſelves rather late, made an agreement to ſtick to an excuſe they framed, which would ſave them from puniſhment. Upon their examination they all adhered in a body to the ſtory; but the maſter, doubting the truth of their aſſertions, examined them ſeparately: the two boys told the truth: Tom was the laſt called into the room where this ſcrutiny was held, and he ſtill perſiſted in the firſt ſtory he had told. Threats of puniſhment or promiſes of reward had no effect upon him. At laſt the ſchoolmaſter upbraided him for his obſtinacy, and his perverſeneſs in adhering to a falſehood; and then told him what his companions had diſcovered. "Well, Sir," ſaid the boy, "they have told you "truth, but it was a mutual agreement to ſave "ourſelves. I was true and faithful to them; I "have told but one lye, they have told two, for "they broke their promiſe to me. I think they "ſhould be puniſhed, and not me." However the maſter's heart might aſſent to the truth of this obſervation, he could not comply with it, and Rigby was puniſhed; but he had the pleaſure to ſee his perfidious companions deſpiſed by the reſt of the boys, who frequently have more virtue than men, and are more earneſt in ſhewing it.

Tom's humanity was alſo conſpicuous in a little time after. A few fields from the farm houſe ſtood the church: and adjoining to the church-yard, which lay high, was a cottage, the upper window of which was almoſt level with the ground on that ſide; the door-way opened on the other to a little common. This cottage lay in Tom's daily pathway to ſchool: and as the little window before mentioned had often afforded him boyiſh diverſion, ſo it had lately introduced him to an acquaintance with the family, conſiſting of a poor woman with five young children. Peeping in one winter's morn-

ing as he was going by, he obſerved the young children crying, and heard the mother telling them that ſhe had no bread to give them. Tom's ſatchel was generally well ſupplied with bread and butter, or cheeſe, for his breakfaſt, as the ſchool was at too great a diſtance for him to go home regularly to his meals. The firſt thought that ſuggeſted itſelf to him was that of dividing his food amongſt them, which he accordingly did directly ; and promiſed them that they ſhould have more victuals ſoon. Accordingly in the afternoon he told his ſtory to his mother and farmer Wilkins, who ſupplied the poor woman with many things, and enabled her and the family to live much more comfortably than they could poſſibly do upon the pariſh allowance. Tom frequently called in to ſee them, and never went empty handed. The Chriſtmas holidays, which ſoon ſucceeded to this adventure, enriched Tom by the bounty of his mother and his friends. This money he appropriated in his own mind to the uſe of his family in the cottage : and in the morning he ſet out with an intention of giving it to them, though the ſnow had fallen in great quantities all the night, and was remarkably deep on the ground. Tom, though almoſt up to his knees, found his way to the cottage : but when he got there he was worſe off than before, for by the drift of ſnow the door was entirely blocked up, and the houſe almoſt buried. This was a dreadful ſight to Tom : however, he went round by the church-yard to the window, and bade them be eaſy, for he would go and bring them relief, in which he was as good as his word ; for the farmer ſent two of his men with Tom, who carried them ſome victuals, and ſoon made a paſſage for them at the door : and all the time he remained in that country he continued their friend.

In

In every little act of beneficence in his power, Tom exerciſed his youthful days. As the widow Rigby's ſon, he was the companion of all the young people on the green near which they lived. His good nature and affability moderated the haſtineſs of his temper, and made him beloved by the young men; and he cauſed many a ſigh to be uttered from the very innocent boſoms of the country girls. He joined in every exerciſe with the lads and laſſes. He was as active as any one of his age at wreſtling, leaping, or running: his dexterity at cricket generally enſured victory to his party. He had acquired ſome knowledge of dancing from a maſter who taught at the ſchool: and this, though ſlender, added to the natural grace of his perſon, made him very agreeable to the girls in their rural dances, which would not have been complete without Tom Rigby.

He had now attained fifteen: and Mrs. Rigby, who really felt all the fondneſs of a mother for a child thus totally relinquiſhed to her care, began to adviſe with her friend Wilkins concerning the lad's future ſettlement in life. They both agreed that he ſhould be put out to ſome genteel trade, as it was high time for him to go into the world. This pleaſed Mrs. Rigby, and was the ſubject of frequent converſations between her and the farmer. One day Mr. Waters, the ſchoolmaſter with whom Tom had been bred, calling in at the farmer's to aſk Mrs. Rigby and the family how they did, the widow ſtarted the ſubject, and aſked him his opinion about the diſpoſal of Tommy; telling him at the ſame time what he had to depend on. Mr. Waters, who loved the boy, thought it a pity that he ſhould be put to trade, when the brightneſs of his parts, and his ſolid underſtanding, when properly improved, might ſet him in a very exalted ſphere in life. He there-

fore told Mrs. Rigby, that though he was ſenſible ſhe had a right to diſpoſe of her ſon as ſhe pleaſed, yet as his opinion was aſked, he could not help lamenting her determination to put him into trade, as he had a great notion that he was calculated for a much higher ſituation ; that he had made great improvements under him, and was then qualified for the univerſity, if his youth did not render it prudent to keep him for another year or two at home ; that he might then chuſe what profeſſion he would adhere to ; and concluded with ſaying, that he eſteemed it wrong to bury talents, ſuch as his were, in buſineſs, when they might appear with ſo much better advantage in another ſituation ; and if they choſe to ſend him to college, he had a particular friend at Cambridge to whom he would recommend Tom, and who would take the greateſt care of him. This propoſal pleaſed Mrs. Rigby ; and the praiſe which Mr. Waters beſtowed on the boy, was the moſt agreeable and flattering compliment that could be paid to her. She told him that ſhe would conſider of it ; but as ſhe had the greateſt deference to his opinion, was half inclined to follow his advice. Mr. Waters added every thing he thought moſt likely to induce her to conſent to ſend him to Cambridge, and departed.

Mrs. Rigby could not help conceiving a notion that Tom was born to cut a figure in life, and that it was her duty conſequently to forward him as much as poſſible ; accordingly, having taken the advice of her privy councellor, Wilkins, ſhe determined to follow the directions of Mr. Waters, and this ſhe notified to him : after which he ſpared no pains in preparing his pupil for his intended courſe.

Tom, whoſe young heart already throbbed with ambition, heard with pleaſure the deſign of ſending him to college ; nothing gave him more uneaſineſs than the thoughts of being confined to a trade : but as that had been but juſt intimated to him, and the

other

other diſtinction having taken place ſo ſoon after the firſt, he never expreſſed his diſlike to the former notion. Indeed, ſo great was his reſpect, and ſo much did he love Mrs. Rigby, whom he ſuppoſed, and with the greateſt reaſon, his mother, that he avoided giving her the ſlighteſt uneaſineſs. And ſhe, on the other hand, thought ſhe could not execute the truſt repoſed in her better than by putting the lad in the moſt likely way to raiſe himſelf in the world, in caſe his mother ſhould ever take it into her head to acknowledge him for her ſon. All parties were pleaſed, and the intervening time, between the propoſal and his going to Cambridge, ſeemed rather tedious in Tom's eyes. However it arrived at laſt; and Mr. Waters, having ſome buſineſs that way, took Tom with him, and placed him under the care of his friend there. As Rigby had a ſincere affection for Mr. Waters, he paid a great attention to the advice he gave him regarding his future conduct and behaviour. He had every thing that he could wiſh for allowed him by the kindneſs of Mrs. Rigby; and he was entering into a new kind of life, that had every charm for a young man of ſo ſanguine a temper as he was: but he could not ſo ſoon forget the admonition of his good friend Mr. Waters, and he did not ſeem to reliſh the generality of his companions; therefore, he did not engage in many parties, and returned the next long vacation to his mother's in Berkſhire, with a very good character from the gentleman to whoſe care he had been committed, and a very doubtful one from his companions, who hardly knew what to make of him.

The young gentleman was heartily pleaſed to ſee his friends at home again: his grateful heart throbbed with joy at meeting his mother; and Wilkins and

and his whole family were in their turns careſſed by him. They were not backward in welcoming him back again; and all was joy. His old friend Mr. Waters received him with great pleaſure, and congratulated him on the improvement he had made. His country friends thronged about him: and he diſtributed his kiſſes to the girls, and his ſhakes of the hand to the men who were his former companions, with great affability and good nature: not but he conceived himſelf of more importance than formerly, and his ſituation flattered his vanity; but he could not avoid recollecting his former days, and the preſent condition of his mother, and that he had heard ſome hints thrown out that his father was but low in the world. Theſe conſiderations, operating with his good ſenſe, prevented the approaches of pride, and kept him ſtill on the level with the companions of his youth. However he did not mix among them ſo much as he formerly had done, but divided his time between his books, his friend Waters, and his exerciſe.

In one of his walks, he had been tempted by the fineneſs of the evening to ſtray farther than uſual, and had got into a part of the country that he ſcarcely remembered. He ſtill walked on, and the novelty of the ſpot pleaſed him. It was above four years ſince he had been there before, and then only when he had been hunting. He accordingly reſolved to take a round-about way home, that he might enjoy the proſpect. He had not proceeded far, before he ſtopped at the ſight of a little neat houſe that he never recollected to have ſeen before: it was divided from the road by ſome clear white palings; and a graſs-plat, ſurrounded by a border of flowers, lay before the houſe; two or three little clumps of flowery ſhrubs filled up the intermediate

ſpace,

ſpace, and the whole had ſuch an air of order and regularity, and ſuch an appearance of elegance, that he was extreamly ſurpriſed: he leaned upon the pole that he made the conſtant companion of his journeys round about the country, and ſtood in ſilent admiration, conjecturing what could be the cauſe of ſuch an appearance in ſo loneſome and deſerted a place.

Rigby from his conſtitution, and the heat of a youthful imagination, poſſeſſed a very romantic turn: he had alſo that ſtrange notion of honour, which, though it ſerves ſometimes to make a man ridiculous, frequently occaſions juſtice to be done to the injured and oppreſſed, and incites us to the moſt generous, benevolent actions, however uncommon. That conduct borders upon Quixotiſm, the world will tell you. It is generous and good, the humane will readily allow. The philoſopher weighs and praiſes the action in the cloſet. The warrior finds it conſiſtent with his ideas of right: but bring any of them to the teſt, and they will all decline doing the like, becauſe it is none of their buſineſs. It has been obſerved, that ſince Cervantes, in the humorous romance of Don Quixote, expoſed and laughed at the madneſs of the Spaniſh gentlemen, and their fondneſs for ſeeking adventures, that the manners of that rank of men are leſs pure, their notions leſs refined, their honour leſs attended to than before; their ideas are not ſo elevated as formerly; and it is imagined, that he has done more harm than good by it. It was a folly, if you can call it one, almoſt inſeparable from the genius and diſpoſition of that people: but yet it ſupported the rights of humanity and juſtice, though the character of the actor might be rather *outre* ſometimes. It belongs only to a ſanguine temper, and a generous heart, to conceive the dictates of diſintereſted honour, where they may chance to tread on danger.

Rigby was poſſeſſed of theſe, and an intrepidity equal to any thing he might attempt. His fertile imagination repreſented ſomething extraordinary, from the appearance of this little dwelling in ſo ſecueſtered a place. Many agreeable and enchanting ideas thronged all at once around him, and he thought himſelf in another land; when a ſhriek from a female voice, ſucceeded by another, awoke him from his reverie; and though naturally compaſſionate and humane, never was he more inclined to ſuccour and relieve diſtreſs than at that moment. With the help of his pole, he ſprang over the pales, and ran to the door of the houſe, which he knocked twice at, before it was opened.

The maid-ſervant, who came to the door, appeared in confuſion, and her face indicated terror and concern. She had never ſeen Rigby before, and knew not what to do: he ſeemed equally at a loſs to explain the reaſon why he wanted admiſſion. He was ſoon relieved from this awkward ſituation, by a voice from within calling "Betty, Betty," with great eagerneſs. Betty obeyed the ſummons, leaving the door open. Rigby's curioſity got the better of his good manners, and he followed the maid. A few ſteps led him to the ſpot he wiſhed to be at. A parlour door was open, and in that apartment were the perſons from whom thoſe ſhrieks proceeded, that firſt alarmed him. A young lady was ſupported in the arms of an elderly woman, who, with a face of diſtreſs and horror, hung over her, and tried to recover her from the fainting fit in which ſhe then was. The maid was alſo lending her aſſiſtance; and the attention to the object of their care was ſo great, that Rigby beheld the ſcene with ſilent wonder, and unperceived by them.

The young lady, though her face was pale, had a great ſhare of beauty, and her perſon was very genteel.

genteel. The other, who was attending her, had the appearance of being her mother; and the concern and tenderneſs ſhe ſhewed, confirmed Rigby in that opinion. The fair invalid began to recover herſelf; and then firſt it was they beheld Rigby, whoſe look ſhewed he was concerned at what he had ſeen.

The preſence of a ſtranger, a witneſs of their confuſion, could not but alarm the ladies. The elder approached him, and very courteouſly demanded of him, what were his commands with her; or if he wanted any perſon there. Rigby replied, that a deſire to relieve diſtreſs only, induced him to tranſgreſs the rules of good manners; and then related how he was alarmed by the ſhrieks he had heard, and was ſorry to ſee that his apprehenſions were but too well founded.

Mrs. Watſon, ſo was the elder lady called, thanked him for his kindneſs, and, as there was a great deal of good-nature and humanity in his countenance, and in his manner of telling his ſtory, ſhe begged the favour of him to walk in. He obeyed, and paid his compliments to the young lady, who ſat almoſt inſenſible. "I perceive, Madam," ſaid he, turning to Mrs. Watſon, "that your complaiſance, "and my bold intruſion, have put a conſtraint upon "your; but let my intention plead my excuſe. I "really was afraid that ſome perſon in diſtreſs ut-"tered that cry, which occaſioned my company "here; and I only deſigned to offer my aſſiſtance."

"We are extremely indebted to you for your "humanity," returned Mrs. Watſon; "but on "this occaſion—"

"No," interrupted the young lady, in a faint voice, "my woes are paſt redreſs."

A ſhower of tears ſucceeded her words, and ſhe found eaſe in that vent for her ſorrows.

"Not

" Not ſo, fair lady," ſaid Rigby; " there is no " ſtate ſo deſperate that Providence cannot relieve; " and, perhaps, I may be an humble inſtrument in " his hands, to procure redreſs, or remedy your ills " in ſome manner. Be aſſured that I have an hand " and heart at your ſervice on this occaſion. Deem " not this offer vain or futile: be aſſured I wiſh to " ſerve you."

" Few are there," returned Mrs. Wilcox, for that was the young lady's name, "who intereſt them- " ſelves in the cauſe of the helpleſs and wretched."

" My dear," ſaid Mrs. Watſon, " there is an all- " ſeeing Providence, who will avenge our cauſe."

This converſation only ſerved to make Rigby more curious.

" Truly, Madam," ſaid he, " I find myſelf much " intereſted in your cauſe at this inſtant; and, " would you make me acquainted with the reaſon " of your uneaſineſs, if there was any poſſibility of " doing any thing to relieve you, or make you hap- " pier, aſſure yourſelf that I would omit nothing to " effect it. I am a ſtranger, and you may doubt me; " but put me to the trial, and you ſhall find me " what I profeſs myſelf."

The honeſt warmth with which Rigby ſpoke, ſerved to inſpire them with confidence. They looked at each other very ſignificantly, but ſaid nothing. At laſt Mrs. Watſon broke ſilence.

" It would be injuſtice to you, Sir, to doubt your " ſincerity or honour," ſaid ſhe. It is very true, " we want a friend at this moment, and have none " near us. But our ſtory will beſt inform you of our " ſituation, and the neceſſity of having ſome aſſiſ- " tance.——Pray, Sir, are you of this part of the " country?"

" I am, Madam; I was bred up not far from " hence."

" Then I ſuppoſe you know Mr. Bennet."

" I do;

" I do ; he is a worthy man, and much eſteemed " here. He had an eſtate of two thouſand a year."

" I have heard that he has an ample fortune.— " Do you know his nephew Mr. Wilcox ?"

" No. Madam, I do not, but I have heard of him. " Mr, Bennet has always regarded him as his own " child, and it is thought intends to add to his for- " tune conſiderably."

" Pray, Sir, has Mr. Bennet any children ?"

" One daughter, Madam, who is reckoned very " handſome."

" It is but too true," ſaid the young Lady, with " a deep ſigh ; " and I am undone."

" Mr. Wilcox, Sir, is the cauſe of our preſent diſ- " treſs," ſaid Mrs. Watſon. " I am the aunt of " that young Lady, who is the daughter of my " younger ſiſter : we are deſcended of a very good " family, and though not wealthy, yet do not want " a genteel independence. Miſs Coates, whoſe fa- " ther died when ſhe was young, left her two thou- " ſand pounds. Her brother, who is elder than her, " is now in the army, and abroad, or we ſhould not " want a protector. I was the neareſt relation ſhe " had, and, from my regard for her mother, who " alſo died when ſhe was a mere child, I took her " under my care, and educated her as my own daugh- " ter. As we could live better upon our moderate " fortunes in the country, we ſettled at a conveni- " ent little place, near ————, in Wiltſhire. " Here we paſs'd many years in peace and content, " and my dear niece had every advantage of educa- " tion I could procure for her. As we lived very " privately, we had very few acquaintances ; one " or two families only did we viſit ; and our great- " eſt intimacy was with Mr Hall's family, who is re- " lated to Mr. Bennet. When Charlotte was about " eighteen, Mr. Wilcox came to ſpend ſome time

" there ;

" there; and to make the place as agreeable as poſ-
" ſible, Mr. Hall had a little ball for his entertain-
" ment. His eye ſoon fingled Charlotte out, and
" ſhe danced with him. His attention was employ-
" ed upon her all the evening; and, I thought, ſhe
" did not look upon him with the eyes of indiffer-
" ence. If you don't know him, Sir, it will be ne-
" ceſſary to acquaint you, that he is genteel in his
" perſon, has an agreeable face, and a very plea-
" ſing and inſinuating addreſs. On my examining
" my Charlotte, when ſhe returned home, I found
" that he had made an impreſſion on her, and that
" ſhe had not the power to refuſe him permiſſion to
" call on her the next day. When he came, he
" made the uſual enquiries after her health, with
" a tender politeneſs; and nothing private paſſed
" between them, as I ſtaid in the room during his
" whole viſit. Whenever we viſited at Mr. Hall's,
" he was ſure to be always at home; and whenever
" any of his daughters came to ſee us, which hap-
" pened frequently, he was always one of the party.
" In ſhort, he ſought, and obtained, opportunity of
" ſpeaking to her alone, and found her but too wil-
" ling to liſten to his vows. Theſe interviews were
" had without my knowledge; and I was not diſ-
" pleaſed when he came one morning to take his
" leave of us. I endeavoured to learn, from Char-
" lotte's behvaiour on the ſeparation, whether ſhe
" ſtill retained her favourable ſentiments of him, or
" whether ſhe had forgot them: but ſo deep was
" their diſſimulation, and ſo artfully did they con-
" ceal their paſſions, that they only parted like
" common acquaintance; nor did I perceive any
" remarkable alteration in her behaviour. In a-
" bout three months after this, I was much ſurpriſ-
" ed when Mr. Wilcox came one evening, booted
" and ſpurred, as juſt alighted from a journey, into

" the

" the parlour, where we were ſitting. He ſaluted
" me with politeneſs: but the agitation which
" Charlotte ſhewed in her manner, plainly diſco-
" vered the cauſe of his viſit. Indeed he did not
" ſuffer me to remain long in doubt about it; he
" unravelled the whole affair himſelf."

" I have ſurprized you, Madam, I ſee," ſaid he,
" by the abrupt appearance I have made before you.
" I confeſs that I ſhould not have raſh'd into your
" preſence in this manner, if I could have contained
" myſelf any longer. I love your niece, your char-
" ming niece, Madam: I love her to diſtraction.
" My preſent peace, and my eternal happineſs, de-
" pend on your kindneſs and approbation of my paſ-
" ſion. My deſigns are the moſt honourable: and
" I hope that Miſs Coates may be inclined to think
" favourably of me; ſhe only wants the ſanction of
" your conſent, which, I hope, you will not with-
" hold from me."

" You have been but a very ſhort time acquainted
" with my niece, Sir; it is hardly to be ſuppoſed
" that ſhe could have time, as yet, to know or judge
" of the ſincerity or truth of that paſſion you pretend
" to have for her. She is her own miſtreſs: and I
" have no other authority over her than that of a
" friend who would prefer her welfare to any other
" conſideration"

" She has ſome reaſon to be aſſured of my conſtancy
" and ſincerity," return'd he; and this ſtep ſhould
" convince you of my attachment to her. I have a
" ſmall eſtate of my own, 'tis true; but I have great
" expectations from my uncle, Mr. Bennet, whom
" you have heard Mr. Hall's family talk of. Should
" I marry without his conſent, it would be a good
" reaſon for his refuſing to do what he has promiſed;
" and though I had rather endure miſery and miſ-
" fortune with your niece, than ſplendor and gran-

" deur

" deur with another, yet that ſhould not be the
" cauſe why I ſhould ſpurn thoſe gifts which may be
" offered me, and which, with a little prudence, I
" may be able to preſerve. I am not yet of age;
" nor can I lawfully marry your niece, whom my
" heart is inviolably devoted to. Permit me then,
" in the mean time, to viſit you here in your ſolitude,
" and earn, by my ſincerity and attention, your good
" opinion of me."

" I ſhall avoid repeating every thing that was ſaid;
" but finding that Charlotte was well inclined to re-
" ceive him as a lover, he had my permiſſion to viſit
" as often as ſuited his convenience. He made the
" moſt of this leave, and came very frequently to us.
" As he always profeſſed and ſupported the greateſt
" appearance of honour, I had no ſort of ſcruple in
" permitting them to enjoy a mutual communication
" of their ſentiments, and indulging them with pri-
" vate interviews: and indeed to ſuch an height had
" Charlotte's affection for him riſen, that I thought
" it would be dangerous to throw any obſtacle in
" the way of their happineſs. But I frequently uſed
" to hint to her, that prudence required her to be
" more reſerved in the acknowledgment of her re-
" gard for him; and obſerved, that ſhe ſhould not
" truſt him too much. Her conſtant reply was,
" that ſhe was thoroughly convinced of his honour
" and affection; and that I had nothing to fear from
" the imprudence of her conduct.

" Things went on in this manner for eighteen
" months; and ſtill I kept the moſt vigilant eye o-
" ver Mr. Wilcox's proceedings. A cold ſeized me,
" which was ſucceeded by a fever, and I was very
" ill for a long time; nor was I judged able to
" leave my chamber for ſix weeks after the fever
" was gone. Mr. Wilcox came in the mean time to
" ſee Charlotte; but finding I was ſo ill, went away,

" promiſing

" promiſing to return again ſhortly. The care
" and attention which my dear child ſhewed me,
" during my ſickneſs, endeared her, if poſſible, more
" than ever to me. Mr. Wilcox came again as I
" was getting better, and frequently uſed to ſit
" with me; and, by his engaging behaviour, raiſed
" my ſpirits, and contributed to my recovery. As
" I could not quit my chamber, he had neceſſarily
" many interviews with my niece, which I could
" not prevent. My health was ſoon re-eſtabliſhed,
" and matters went on again in their old train.

" In about four months after that, I had great
" reaſon to believe that my poor Charlotte was go-
" ing to be taken ill: her health viſibly declined,
" her ſpirits were gone; no more the cheerful and
" entertaining companion of my ſolitary hours,
" ſhe ſat melancholy and ſilent, and frequent ſighs
" heaved her boſom. My enquiries after her health
" availed nothing. She ever replied to them, that
" ſhe was very well; and though ſhe would not
" confeſs it, yet it was evident that ſomething prey-
" ed on her. I was much alarmed, and apprehend-
" ed what I dreaded to know for a certainty.

" Mr. Wilcox came over to ſee us, but it was ve-
" ry privately; and we had ſtrict injunctions, not
" to mention a ſyllable of his viſits to Mr. Hall's fa-
" mily. During his ſtay, Charlotte appeared more
" chearful and eaſy than ſhe had been for ſome time
" before; but on his departure, relapſed into her
" former melancholy and liſtleſſneſs. I again re-
" newed my enquiries, and preſſed her in the ten-
" dereſt manner to make me acquainted with the
" cauſe of her uneaſineſs. With great difficulty the
" matter was extorted from her; and ſhe confeſſed,
" with much heſitation, that during my illneſs,
" when Mr. Wilcox had viſited her, ſhe was induc-
" ed to conſent to a private marriage; that the

" fears

" fears he had of his uncle's coming to the know-
" ledge of this affair, was the reaſon why it was
" done in this ſecret manner: and ſhe further aſ-
" ſured me, that he had behaved as the moſt ten-
" der and affectionate huſband; and at that time
" ſhe was afraid of being with child; and when he
" was laſt with her, he had conſented to her ac-
" quainting me with the whole tranſaction.

" The matter was now paſt redreſs: and inſtead
" of giving her pain, by any unſeaſonable re-
" prehenſions, I endeavoured to put the beſt face
" on the affair, though I could not help conceiv-
" ing badly of his intentions, who took ſuch an
" advantage of my illneſs; but theſe notions I con-
" cealed very induſtriouſly from her. When he
" came to viſit us again, which was ſhortly after,
" he acknowledged himſelf to be her huſband, in
" my preſence; and then entered into an explana-
" tion of matters, and the reaſons which induced
" him to take this ſtep. But as Charlotte was then
" encreaſing in bulk, it was judged neceſſary to
" quit that part of the country, to prevent this af-
" fair from coming to light, and to hide the effects
" of their mutual paſſion. He admitted the juſtneſs
" of the reaſoning; and informed us, that there
" was a little houſe within ten or a dozen miles of
" his uncle's, where we might live very retired.
" He meant, this houſe in which we now are; and
" in a ſhort time we were removed to it. Here Mrs.
" Wilcox brought her huſband a fine boy, now
" three years old; and here we have lived ſequeſ-
" tered and unknown theſe three years and a half.

" The ſhort and irregular viſits which Mr. Wilcox
" has made, we have been forced to be ſatisfied
" with, as ſuch conduct was the effect of neceſſity.
" This, though not ſo agreeable as could be wiſh-
" ed, yet renders us contented and happy; and

" thus

" thus we ſhould have remained, if Betty had not
" brought us ſome very diſtreſſing intelligence. She
" neither knew Mr. Wilcox's real name, whom we
" always called Smith ; nor did ſhe know his con-
" nexions : but going yeſterday to ſee her friends,
" by our permiſſion, ſhe brought us home word,
" that a grand wedding was going forward at 'Squire
" Bennet's. This alarmed our curioſity : and up-
" on an enquiry, we learned, that Mr. Wilcox was
" going to be married to Mr. Bennet's daughter, ei-
" ther to-morrow or next day. This affected poor
" Charlotte ſo much, that ſhe fainted away, and
" cauſed thoſe ſcreams which induced you thus po-
" litely and humanely to offer us your aſſiſtance. I
" have now, Sir, informed you of the cauſe of our
" uneaſineſs ; and, ſituated as we are, without a
" friend, or even an acquaintance, what to do I
" know not."

While Mrs. Watſon related this ſtory to the attentive Rigby, Charlotte covered her ſorrow from his view : however, frequent ſobs and heavy ſighs informed him very ſufficiently of her grief. He was very much affected at this tale, delivered with much ſimplicity and candour ; and it was ſome time before he could recollect himſelf, or determine in what manner he ſhould proceed to ſerve this young lady, whoſe cauſe he reſolved to eſpouſe ; and had he even been wavering, the entrance of a ſweet little boy, who ran to his afflicted mother, would have been ſufficiently powerful to fix his reſolutions.

" Your ſtory, Madam, is very diſtreſſing indeed,
" and perhaps it may be worſe than we ſuppoſe : for
" if your marriage was valid, I can hardly imagine
" Mr. Wilcox would venture to take a ſecond wife.
" I fear he has impoſed upon you : but I will con-
" trive to ſee him to-morrow morning, and let you
" know the truth of the matter."

The

The ladies both expreſſed their obligations to him.

" But," ſaid he, " if you will write a letter to " your huſband, it will be a means of introducing " me with more propriety to him, and my words " will have more weight; as he muſt imagine me " acquainted with this whole tranſaction, which " will not do him any credit on the diſcovery."

Mrs. Watſon joined Rigby in opinion, and Mrs. Wilcox retired to write the letter.

The aunt in the mean time told Mr. Rigby, (for he acquainted her with his name and habitation,) that ſhe hoped he would not expoſe himſelf to any danger of diſobliging Mr. Wilkins or his mother, by intereſting himſelf in their behalf.

" On the contrary, Madam, I ſhould diſoblige " them if I did not. But even a weak advocate in " the cauſe of oppreſſed innocence and virtue be- " comes powerful: every thing that I can do to " ſerve you, you may command."

Mrs. Wilcox returned with the letter, and apologizing at the ſame time that ſhe thanked him, ſaid ſhe was ſo diſtracted, ſhe knew not what to ſay or do.

Rigby expreſſed his ſorrow at the cauſe; and again aſſured her that he would bring her ſome account how he ſucceeded, or in what poſture matters ſtood. He drank a couple of glaſſes of wine at their earneſt entreaty, aſſuring him that it would be of ſervice to him after his walk. He then took his leave, and went the ſhorteſt way home.

His imagination, during this ſpace of time, was not idle: he conſidered how he ſhould proceed, and in what moſt effectual manner he could ſerve Mrs. Wilcox. Indeed he ſpent the greater part of the night in theſe cogitations: but knowing no time was to be loſt, he roſe very early, and proceeded to Mr. Bennet's with all poſſible expedition. It was diſtant

twelve

twelve miles from Wilkins's and it was between eight and nine, when Rigby arrived in the court-yard before the houſe. Here ſeemed to be a buſtle, and the ſervants were all in a hurry. Two carriages were waiting to proceed to church with the bride and bride groom, for the news which poor Mrs. Wilcox had ſo providentially heard, was but too true. Rigby addreſſed the firſt ſervant he ſaw, whom he imagined to belong to the houſe, and aſked him whether Mr. Wilcox was at home.

" At home, Lord bleſs you! at home! yes, Sir;
" he's juſt going to be married to maſter's daughter.

" I have ſome buſineſs with him," replied Rigby,
" and muſt ſpeak with him."

" I believe you muſt ſtay, Sir, 'till he comes back
" from the church then, for they are all ready, and
" the coach waits for them.

" I muſt and will ſee him before he goes there," ſaid Rigby, alighting off his horſe, and going towards the door of the houſe.

" Well, Sir, if your buſineſs is ſo very urgent, I
" will let him know you want him. What name
" ſhall I tell him, Sir?"

" If I told you, it would be unknown to Mr.
" Wilcox: you may ſay, a ſtranger wants to ſee
" him."

His horſe was given into the cuſtody of the groom, and he followed the ſervant into the houſe, who ſhewed him into a parlour, while he went on ſearch of Mr. Wilcox. He ſoon came, elate with hope and eager with deſire; his heart exulting in the proſpect of happineſs, and joy animated his countenance. This circumſtance, with the addition of dreſs, rendered his perſon, naturally graceful, an object worthy of notice.

" I am informed Sir, that you have ſome buſineſs
" with me."

" I have,

" I have, Sir; the delivery of this letter is the " principal part of it."

The form of his viſage changed as he read theſe words.

" IF your heart is not totally a ſtranger to hu- " manity as well as love, you muſt conceive " what I felt on hearing the news of your going to " be married. Are your oaths forgotten, or can you " pretend to break the nuptial tie, in which I was " bound yours for life? Sure, Sir, you cannot in- " tend to reward the paſſion which you endeavoured " to inſpire me with, and but too fatally accom- " pliſhed, by leaving me to ſhame and public diſ- " grace. What is to become of the helpleſs infant " which you once ſo much delighted in? and what " is to be the portion of the wretched mother? " cannot the tender names of huſband and father, " recal your affection? and will not your honour " and ſenſibility prevent your making any other wo- " man unhappy, by giving her an heart or hand " which I lay a prior and ſuperior claim to?—But " I am diſtracted——No other woman can or ſhall " poſſeſs them while I have life or power to aſſert " my right, which I ſhall do, and prove to the " world that I am, your affectionate and lawful, " though neglected wife.

CHARLOTTE WILCOX."

When he had finiſhed, he folded up the letter, and put it in his waiſtcoat pocket very deliberately.

" It is very well, Sir. Well, Sir;——and well, " Sir; you were charged with the delivery of this " letter, and you have executed your commiſſion."

" Very

" Very true, Sir, for ſo much of it ; but I was " to take an anſwer back, and that which you have " given is ſo very unſatisfactory, that I cannot " think of encreaſing Mrs. Wilcox's affliction by re- " peating it to her."

" You are likely to have no other, Sir ; and I " beg you may retire."

" Upon my word, Sir, I ſhall not : that lady has " been groſsly injured, as I have juſt reaſon to be- " lieve, and it remains with you to do her juſtice."

" What do you mean, Sir ? am I to marry a " girl whom I only diverted my ſofter hours with : " ſhe is not my wife, nor ever ſhall be."

" You have acknowledged her to be your wife " very often, Sir : ſhe has been eſteemed in that " light by you : and if your taking advantage of " her partiality for you, and her inexperience impo- " edupon her under the pretence of marriage, ſhe is " really your wife."

" I am not at leiſure at preſent to attend to your " caſuiſtry, Sir ; and I once more repeat it to you, " that I am not married to that woman, whoſe ad- " vocate you are. Your buſineſs with me is now " finiſhed, and I ſhall give you no other anſwer."

" Then I ſhall apply to Mr. Bennet for one."

" What ſhould you apply to him for ?" ſaid Wil- cox haſtily, with a countenance highly expreſſive of fury.

" To know," replied Rigby very calmly, " whe- " ther he will chuſe to give you his daughter while " you have a wife, at leaſt a nominal one ; and to " ſatisfy my own curioſity,"

" Do you know what a taſk you have underta- " ken ?"

" Perfectly well : I came here on behalf of your " wife, Mrs. Wilcox : I came to prevent the ruin " and miſery of an unhappy young lady, whom " you are going to marry, and to aſſert the cauſe of " innocence and virtue."

" But

" But do you conſider, Sir," ſaid Wilcox, ſoft-
ening his voice, " what an irreparable injury your
" proceeding ſo raſhly in this matter may do me?
" —I ſhall loſe two thouſand a year by this beha-
" viour of her's; and ſhe has but two thouſand
" poun s for her portion.—That ſhe ſhould be ſo
" blind to the proſpect fortune opens to her!—I will
" tell you what, Sir: I will allow her three hun-
" dred pounds a year for life, if ſhe will conſent to
" accept that, and drop all claims which ſhe may
" pretend to on me."

" I am by no means authorized to conclude any
" ſuch agreement; nor would it be accepted, if it
" was offered. That is a poor compenſation for
" the loſs of her peace and honour; a weak ſhield
" to defend her from the inſults of the world, who
" will reproach her for the ſhame you have brought
" on her. Beſides, Sir, ſhe loves you as her huſband;
" and do you think ſhe will look upon that ſum as
" a recompence ſufficient to prevail on her to conſent
" to abandon your ſociety all the days of her life?
" I am ſure ſhe would not. And had you ſeen the
" agony ſhe was in, when the intelligence of your in-
" tended marriage reached her, I am convinced your
" affection for her and your child, would have revi-
" ved, and prevented your wronging her in ſo tender
" a point."

" Perhaps it might, and, perhaps it might not.
" But that is very immaterial now. I really cannot
" ſettle that matter at preſent: to-morrow, or the
" day after, I ſhall be more at leiſure, and then we
" will talk about it more fully."

" That will not do, Sir; this matter muſt be ſet-
" tled inſtantly; another hour would have put it
" out of my power to have ſettled it at all: there-
" fore, Sir, I muſt have a definitive and poſitive an-
" ſwer."

" And

" And pray, Sir, who are you, who thus aſſume " a right to demand it?"

" That does not ſignify, Sir, who or what I am: " I have no further buſineſs with you; I will now " ſpeak to your uncle."

" That you muſt have my permiſſion for firſt."

" I will try that," ſaid Rigby. And ringing a bell that was very convenient to him, a ſervant appeared at the door.

" Tell Mr. Bennet," ſaid he, in a peremptory tone of voice, " that a gentleman has buſineſs of the " utmoſt importance to communicate to him, and " muſt ſpeak to him inſtantly."

Wilcox ran to the door, and gave the man poſitive orders not to deliver the meſſage.

" And ſo, Sir," ſaid Rigby, with a contemptuous ſmile, " you think to prevent my ſpeaking to Mr. " Bennet. I took this private manner of telling you " my errand here, as moſt reſpectful and proper; " nor would I diſtreſs the young lady, who has ſo " happily eſcaped the ſnare that was laid for her."

" Villain!" exclaimed Wilcox, his rage overcoming both his reaſon and prudence; what has " tempted thee to ruſh thus blindly on deſtruction, " by coming to inſult me here, and in the moſt cri- " tical hour of my life!"

" Sir," ſaid Rigby, " I have treated you with " temper and civility; and though I diſregard " your threats, I ſhall not take the proper notice of " them at preſent: but I have an excellent memory; " I ſhall find out Mr. Bennet, and then return to " you."

He made an offer to go to the door, when Wilcox ſeized him by the collar—" If I muſt ſuffer," ſaid he, " I will moſt willingly, for ridding the world of ſuch " an inſolent, meddling raſcal as thou art."

He aimed a blow at Rigby, who caught it with his left-hand, and, with a judicious application of his

toes,

toes, tripped up his antagoniſt, and brought him to the ground, overſetting in his fall a large ſide-board of plate and glaſſes, that had been laid out for the ceremony.

The horrid craſh and noiſe brought Mr. Bennet into the parlour, followed by his ſervants. Miſs Bennet, alarmed at the ſound, ran to the place whence it proceeded. But how much was ſhe ſurprized, to ſee her intended huſband lie ſenſeleſs and bleeding on the floor, ſtupified with the fall, and a cut in his head, which he had ſtruck againſt the table; and at the appearance of a ſtrange young man, ſtanding over him with a look of pity, his waiſt-coat open, and his ſhirt torn away from his neck. She ſcreamed, and that brought Rigby to the conſideration of the ſituation in which he was; for he lamented the accident that had befallen Wilcox, who really was the aggreſſor.

The ſervants ſnatched up their young maſter from the floor, where he lay, amidſt broken glaſs; and ſeating him in a chair, began to endeavour to reſtore him to himſelf. Rigby, with a politeneſs that was natural to him, approached Mr. Bennet, who had gone to his daughter's aſſiſtance and was bidding her compoſe herſelf, (for ſhe was extremely agitated at this ſcene; and the more eſpecially as ſhe knew not the cauſe of it.) He began to apologize to Mr. Bennet for the confuſion he had cauſed in his houſe; but added, that his nephew was the aggreſſor, who had attacked and inſulted him.

"I heard the latter part of your converſation, "Sir, and am of your opinion; but I ſhould be "glad to know the cauſe of your quarrel."

"You ſhall, Sir: his oppoſing my-ſpeaking to "you was the cauſe why it went ſo far. But it is "neceſſary we ſhould be alone."

"That we ſhall preſently.

The

The company, who were already aſſembled in the houſe, hearing this uproar among the ſervants, ran to the ſcene of action to learn the reaſon of it. Some applied themſelves to aſſiſt Mr. Wilcox, and others to Miſs Bennet, who ſat pale and trembling, and was as much an object of pity as the wounded man. Rigby, on whom every eye was turned, ſtood looking through a window into the garden.

Mr. Wilcox had by this time, recovered the uſe of his ſenſes: his wound being dreſſed by a ſurgeon who happened then to be at the houſe, who told him there were no dangerous ſymptoms. Mr. Bennet requeſted the company to retire from that parlour till it could be prepared for their reception; and having ſent away all the ſervants, he applied to Rigby for the explanation of his behaviour.

"That, Sir," replied he, "you ſhall have: "and I am glad Mr. Wilcox is preſent, as well as "your daughter, whom this affair more principally "concerns. As for me, Sir, I was only induced "by humanity and pity to take the part I did. "Your nephew's raſhneſs has made me now more "particularly intereſted: for unleſs I can clear my-"ſelf, I ſhall be looked upon by you and this young "lady in a very bad light. It was to ſerve another "lady, who claims that gentleman for her huſband, "that brought me here."

"Her huſband!" ſaid Mr. Bennet, in great ſurprize.

"It is very true, Sir: and a letter which I deli-"vered him will ſet that matter in a better light."

Mr. Bennet demanded the letter from his nephew, who gave it with a very bad grace, and having peruſed the contents, declared it was ſomething extraordinary.

Rigby then gave an ample account of the manner in which he became acquainted with Mrs. Wilcox,

as

as he called her all through his narrative: and related, to the aſtoniſhment of Mr. Bennet and his daughter, every thing that the reader has been already informed of concerning them.

During this recital, Wilcox maintained a ſullen ſilence, and by that means gave weight to what was ſaid againſt him.

" This ſeems to be a very extraordinary affair, " Sir," ſaid Mr. Bennet. " Do theſe ladies live far " off ?

" About twelve miles, Sir."

" Then we will pay them a viſit. By your not " denying any thing this gentleman has alledged " againſt you, Mr. Wilcox, I ſuppoſe we may take " it for granted that it is all true," ſaid he, turning to his nephew.

" It is not, Sir," replied he : " and I have alrea- " dy declared that I am not married to her.

" I know not, Sir," replied Rigby, " how it is : " the lady ſays ſhe is his lawful wife, and as you pro- " poſe taking the trouble of viſiting her, ſhe will be " able to ſatisfy your more particular enquiries."

" You may depend upon it, Sir, that my daugh- " ter and I ſhall viſit her to-morrow if you will pleaſe " to give me her addreſs, and I ſhall be glad to meet " you there. I ſhall beg the favour of you to ſtay " to dinner with me : this will prevent enquiries " being made about my reaſons for poſtponing the " nuptial ceremony, and which I ſhall ſtifle as much " as poſſible."

Rigby conſented with ſome intreaty : and Mr. and Miſs Bennet went to join their company, Rigby ſtaying behind with Mr. Wilcox at his own deſire.

" You have requeſted to ſpeak to me, Sir. What " are your commands ?"

" You have done me ſignal ſervice to day, Sir," ſaid Wilcox. " This morning that ſaw me riſe

" crowned

" crowned with the hopes of enjoying my uncle's
" fortune, and his charming daughter, ſees me al-
" ſo diſappointed and ruined; and to you I am in-
" debted for this good office."

" Theſe are very unmerited reproaches. I can
" have no intereſt in your deſtruction: and though
" I know that your marriage with Miſs Bennet muſt
" be broke off, yet I could not have procured juſtice
" for that lady you have injured without taking this
" ſtep. Had Mrs. Wilcox's brother been in the way,
" matters might yet have gone to greater and more
" dreadful extremities. Compaſſion to her ſufferings
" made me undertake this diſagreeable taſk: and even
" now your ſituation with your uncle is not irretriev-
" able."

" In what manner can I be reſtored to his good
" opinion? As you have been the means of undo-
" ing me, you ſhould give me your advice how I
" may be reinſtated again."

" This application to me ſeems a little extraor-
" dinary, Sir; I can hardly imagine you in ear-
" neſt."

" You may be aſſured I am."

" My knowledge of Mr. Bennet's character is only
" by report, and you muſt therefore be much bet-
" ter acquainted with his temper than I am. If
" there was any impoſition in this affair with Mrs.
" Wilcox, you had better confeſs it to him: he is
" a good natured man, and moſt probably will be
" induced to forgive and reſtore you to his favour
" again. There is no injury done to his daughter:
" and the ſight of your wife and child may gain
" upon him very much."

" It may be ſo. I have wronged that poor girl,
" and am now ſufficiently puniſhed for it."

He then unfolded the whole matter to Rigby, acquainting him that a truſty ſervant, dreſſed in a clergyman's habit, had performed the ceremony:

that conſequently the unſuſpecting, credulous girl was impoſed on, and he was admitted to her arms. He concluded by ſaying "that Mr. Rigby was now "informed of the whole matter, and he hoped he "would ſtand his friend."

"As far as I can, you may depend upon me, Sir: "it was not to gratify any private malice that I "came here to-day: it was to procure juſtice for "that unhappy Lady who mourns your eſtranged "love. If I have procured that, my buſineſs ends, "and every friendly action that I can do for you I "will. I promiſe you I entertain no animoſity or "hatred againſt you on account of your paſſionate "expreſſions: that is all forgotten."

"Your generoſity overwhelms me, and though," ſaid he, ſtretching out his hand in token of friendſhip to Rigby, "you have deſtroyed this ſcheme of "happineſs, I hope you will help to ſettle ſome other "for me."

Rigby ſhook hands with him: and telling him he might be happy if he would, left him, and went to ſeek Mr. Bennet.

However mortifying this ſtep was to Wilcox's pride, yet he found it extremely neceſſary if he expected to be upon any terms with his uncle. The viſit of Rigby that day, and the intended expedition the next to ſee his wife, would ruin him entirely with his uncle, if he could not by ſome means or other ward off the impending blow. This induced him to make Rigby a confidant, and to intreat him to be his friend. He undertook this taſk very readily: and Wilcox requeſted him to tell his uncle how ſorry he was for the offence he had committed, and then to let him have ſome converſation with him. He therefore ſat, when Rigby had left him, in eager expectation of his uncle's approach, tormented with a variety of diſagreeable and vexatious thoughts. Rigby, as he had

promiſed,

promiſed, went to Mr. Bennet, and told him what his nephew deſired; he added every thing that he could with any propriety ſay to him on Mr. Wilcox's behalf; and Mr. Bennet complying with his deſire, went to him directly.

At his approach, he threw himſelf on his knees before him: confeſſed that he had deluded Miſs Coates by the appearance of a marriage; that it was by no means valid, nor, had he married his couſin, could ſhe have ſuffered: but that now it remained only for him to lament the iniquity of his behaviour, by which he had ſo long abuſed her; and that, with his permiſſion, he would accompany them to-morrow to Mrs. Wilcox's, and there have the ceremony lawfully performed; hoping, at the ſame time, that he ſhould not entirely loſe his uncle's favour, which was the deareſt thing on earth to him. Mr. Bennet really loved him, or he would not have been ſo ready to have given him his daughter, whom he truly loved, and all his fortune. He reproached him with his conduct: the other heightened his crime, and by his repentance and apparent contrition prevailed on the uncle to forgive him, and he promiſed to provide for his wife and child, inſiſting on it, that he ſhould go with them the next day to her: this he agreed to, and Wilcox was reſtored in ſome meaſure to favour.

Mr. Bennet was more concerned at the interruption of this match than his daughter, who had never formed any choice herſelf, and whoſe reſpect for parental authority induced her to marry her couſin, whom ſhe was not very fond of; therefore this affair was rather pleaſing to her than otherwiſe.

Miſs Bennet was now in her eighteenth year, and her charms were the theme of all the young gentlemen in the country, who could make any pretenſions to her. She loſt her mother when ſhe was fifteen,

which affected her ſo much that her father thought ſhe would not have recovered it; and as ſhe was an only child, he forgot his grief in endeavouring to alleviate hers. A ſoft languor overſpread her face; her looks were complacent and gentle: her mild blue eyes ſpoke the ſenſibility of her heart; the good nature and tenderneſs of her diſpoſition appeared in every action: her mind had received every poſſible cultivation; and as ſhe poſſeſſed very good natural parts, ſhe attained to excellence in the moſt polite and amiable accompliſhments. Not to give pain to a parent, whom ſhe tenderly loved, as ſhe had no abſolute averſion to her couſin, ſhe determined to make her father happy rather than herſelf, and ſaw the preparations for the nuptials going forward without an emotion of any kind. We have mentioned her ſurpriſe at ſeeing Rigby and her couſin in the parlour; but though ſhe was much ſhocked at the ſcene, yet ſhe could not help looking very attentively at the young ſtranger. When ſhe heard him relate the cauſe of his creating that diſturbance, and ſaw how kindly he had eſpouſed the intereſt of the friendleſs and unprotected, and how humanely and cautiouſly he ſpoke of Mr. Wilcox, ſhe felt the tendereſt emotions in his favour. His perſonal accompliſhments did not paſs unnoticed by her; but the generoſity of his behaviour, and the gallantry of his character, ſtruck her forcibly; and ſhe wiſhed in ſecret ſhe had been doomed to the arms of ſuch a man. Her good opinion of him was not altered when ſhe entered into converſation with him: ſhe found him ſenſible, ſprightly, and engaging, and ſhe was ſoon more enamoured than ſhe knew of. Rigby beheld her with reſpect and pity: for he conjectured ſhe muſt have been fond of the man ſhe was going to be married to, and that this diſappointment was ſhocking.

Mr.

Mr. Bennet and his nephew ſoon joined the company, making a general apology concerning the delay of the nuptials. Tho' this proceeding was ſomewhat extraordinary, yet politeneſs prevented their friends from making any enquiries, as well as the preſence of the parties concerned. After dinner Rigby took his leave, and Mr. Bennet following him out, promiſed he would meet him the next morning at the lady's houſe: and Rigby aſſuring him he would not fail to be there, once more took his leave, and departed.

BOOK V.

RIGBY, when he quitted Mr. Bennet's, went directly to Mrs. Wilcox, as he ſuppoſed that ſhe was very uneaſy about his coming, to inform her of the reſult of his interview with her huſband. The two ladies ſat in a ſtate of anxious expectation: and having paid his compliments to them, he made them acquainted in general terms with what had happened, and told them that they might expect Mr. Bennet and his daughter, and Mr. Wilcox, there the next day and that he would take the liberty of waiting on them alſo, as they had appointed to meet him there. So unexpected and agreeable a turn gave them great pleaſure: and they were not ſparing of their thanks and acknowledgments of gratitude to their benefactor. Rigby aſſured them of his good intentions to ſerve them: and, promiſing to be punctual, the next day, as the evening began to approach, he took his leave, and departed. Not even Mrs. Wilcox, who, it may naturally be ſuppoſed, expected the interview on the enſuing day with ſome degree

of anxiety and impatience, was more earneſt about it than Miſs Bennet. The more ſhe thought of Rigby the more ſhe liked him: and when the characters of the two men were compared, her judgment approved the choice of her heart, and her couſin was no longer tolerable in her eyes.

In the morning the parties ſet out to meet Rigby at Mrs. Wilcox's; and Lydia Bennet indulged herſe in the pleaſure ſhe ſhould have in ſeeing Mr. Rigby again. He was punctual: and when Mr. Bennet's coach ſtopped at the door, he flew to hand them out, and conduct them to Mrs. Wilcox, whoſe heart underwent ſtrange palpitations, fearful and anxious for her fate, which would be now determined. When Rigby took the gentle Lydia's hand in his, to help her from the carriage, he felt it tremble, ignorant that he was the cauſe of that trepidation. Wilcox's ſenſations were not the moſt pleaſing: he was confounded and abaſhed at the thought of facing the woman he deſigned to have wronged, and ſilence and dejection teſtified his mortification.

As they paſſed through the little garden which lay at the front of the houſe, and which we have before deſcribed, they could not help admiring the taſte in which it was laid out, and the neatneſs in which it was kept. When they entered the houſe, Rigby introduced Mr. and Miſs Bennet to Mrs. Wilcox and her aunt: and Mr. Bennet immediately addreſſed her by the title of his niece; and aſſured her, that he conſidered her as ſuch; and, though he was very ſorry for the occaſion of his viſit to her in one ſhape, yet he was extremely pleaſed with it in another; and had no doubt but it would be productive of much happineſs to them all. She returned his compliment with a reſpectful politeneſs, which pleaſed him very much: he then told her, that his nephew was very deſirous to make her every amends

in

in his power, for the ill treatment ſhe had met with from him. Here Wilcox interrupted him, by aſſuring him, that, by his future conduct, he would endeavour to make his dear Charlotte forget that he ever intended her any injury. Mr. Bennet led her to him. Wilcox embraced her tenderly, and called her his dear wife. The tears of joy that paced one another down her cheeks, calmed her tranſports. Miſs Bennet was not remiſs in paying her all proper compliments on the occaſion, and ſaluted her by the title of couſin.

Mrs. Watſon's apprehenſions, which ſhe had but too juſtly formed, being now at an end, all was joy and happineſs in the good woman's breaſt. The tear of pleaſure ſtood alſo in Rigby's eyes, who was conſidered by the women as the cauſe of their happineſs nor did he go unrewarded with thanks. The little boy was introduced, and careſſed by the whole company. His father felt his affection revive at the ſight of him; and as he had now gone too far to retract, he made the beſt of every thing. Mrs. Watſon had prepared ſome refreſhments for her gueſts; and they accepted of them, as well as Mrs. Wilcox's invitation to dinner. It was a day of happineſs to them all: for Wilcox appeared to be very well ſatisfied, whether he was really ſo or no.

Rigby had attached himſelf to Miſs Bennet by chance; but it rendered her as happy as if it had been done with deſign; nay ſhe ſometimes would flatter herſelf that it was from predilection. The fortunate event of this affair filled them all with gaiety: and many ſprightly ſallies eſcaped Rigby, who was heartily rejoiced at the ſucceſs of his negociation. They were not loſt upon Lydia, who was particulaly animated herſelf, and diſplayed her charms to the inſenſible Rigby; whoſe reſpect forbad him to entertain any tenderer ſentiments.

The dinner was elegant and good, conſidering the time they had to prepare it in, and the place: however, it ſhewed Mrs. Wilcox to advantage, as the miſtreſs of a family. Mr. Bennet and his daughter expreſſed great ſatisfaction at every thing: and when dinner was over, he told his niece, that it was time they ſhould be ſettled; and, without hinting to her the impoſition that had been already practiſed on her, leſt it might leſſen her huſband in her eyes, or be the cauſe of future uneaſineſs, he begged, for his ſatisfaction, that Mr. Wilcox would undergo the trouble of having the marriage ceremony repeated; ſaying, that he was a whimſical old man, and liked to ſee his kindred faſt and ſecurely bound. Mrs. Wilcox ſubmitted herſelf entirely to him: and he fixed the next day but one for the celebration of theſe nuptials, and invited Mr. Rigby to be preſent; adding, that he ſhould be always glad to ſee him at his houſe; and inſiſted on his frequently viſiting him. After tea, Mr. Bennet and his family departed, and Rigby alſo went home. Miſs Bennet was ſtill more pleaſed with his company and converſation than ever; and the praiſes which Mrs. Watſon and Mrs. Wilcox rendered to his good-nature, humanity, and generoſity, only ſerved to encreaſe her good opinion of him. Her diſpoſition, naturally mild and gentle, was ſuſceptable of the tendereſt impreſſions: they penetrated deeply, and were not eaſily effaced. He alone employed her thoughts; and long was the time, in her imagination, till ſhe ſaw him again. He went on the appointed day, to be a witneſs of the ceremony, and of that happineſs he had been the means of procuring the whole family. All was joy and rapture: and Mr. Bennet promiſed never to withdraw his protection from them. He made his niece a preſent of a very handſome ſet of jewels; and aſſured her, he would ſettle a thouſand pounds on her little ſon, and would ſpeedily conſult with her

Her husband for his further advancement in life. Rigby was truly happy in seeing them so; and was as much pleased, and in as great spirits, as any of them. It was agreed, that in a few days Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox should go over to Mr. Bennet's, and spend a month; and by that means be introduced to the neighbouring gentry, who would render their situation more agreeable. The new-married couple accordingly soon went over to him; and he fulfilled all his promises.

The time now approached for Rigby to return to Cambridge again; and he went to Mr. Bennet's to pay a visit, and take his leave. The gentle Lydia's countenance was overcast with sorrow, when she was informed of the intention of his visit; but it was not perceived by any one of the company. Mrs. Wilcox expressed her gratitude to him, for the good offices he had done her; and as a very tender and sincere friendship subsisted between the two ladies, she made no scruple of taking a ring off her finger before Miss Bennet, in which was contained some of her own, and her brother's hair, set round with diamonds, and, presenting it to him, insisted he should wear it as a small memorial of her friendship for him. He returned the compliment, by thanking, and promising to obey her; assuring her at the same time, that she over-rated his poor services very much. The gentlemen now returned, and they both expressed their sorrow at Rigby's departure. After spending the day with them, he took his leave, not before Mr. Bennet had made him promise to come and see him again on his return.

As this whole transaction was kept secret, it did not reach the worthy family at Mr. Wilkins's, who all loved Tom. His good-nature and affability rendered him the delight of every body. As it was necessary that some road should be pointed out for him to pursue in future life, and he being indifferent

what

what profeſſion to chuſe, upon a conſultation held with his old friend Mr. Waters, he gave his opinion for his taking orders. Rigby had no ſort of objection to the church, but rather a liking for it. Mr. Waters, who knew his integrity and uprightneſs, the honeſty of his heart, and the earneſtneſs with which he attached himſelf to any thing his mind was ſet upon, thought that he would be an honour to the gown. It was therefore determined, as ſoon as he was capable of receiving orders, that he ſhould be ordained. It was very pleaſing to Mrs. Rigby that her Tom ſhould be a clergyman, eſpecially as his father was one; and we may be allowed to call him her ſon with great propriety, for ſhe was as fond of him as if he had been really her child; nor did he fail in paying her that duty and attention that a mother claimed.

Tom mounted his horſe with a heavy heart, when obliged to part from all thoſe endearing ties that formed his happineſs: and he had travelled for two days before he got rid of the melancholy ſenfations that attended his bidding them adieu at Wilkins's, whoſe whole family he conſidered as related to him in ſome meaſure.

The third day, as he was purſuing his journey, his road lay through a wild and loneſome country for a few miles. He entered on a wood, and had proceeded for a little way, when he thought he heard the ſound of blows and loud voices: he quickened his pace, and ſoon arrived at the ſcene of action: a man who ſeemed to be ſtrong and ſtout, plainly, yet well doeſſed, was defending himſelf againſt the aſſaults of three men, armed with bludgeons. He had only a quarter-ſtaff in his hand, which, nevertheleſs he employed to a very good purpoſe, both in his own defence and the annoyance of his aſſailants; one of whom he had knocked down juſt as Rigby ſtopped his horſe at the place

where

where the combat was. The ſpot they had choſen, was a path which led through the wood, and lay along the road-ſide: the gentleman neither called for aſſiſtance, or, by his conduct, did he ſeem to deſire any. However Rigby could not ſee ſuch odds, and though the gentleman defended himſelf very well, it was but probable that he would have been deſtroyed at laſt. Without any heſitation, Rigby jumped off his horſe, and ran to his aſſiſtance: he ſeized the fellow's ſtick, who had not yet recovered from the blow that felled him; and attacking one of the two, who were ſtill ſtriking very furiouſly at this ſingle man, ſoon drew his attention another way. This unexpected aſſiſtance encreaſed the fury of the ruffians, and eſpecially him whom it was Rigby's lot to attack, who was the moſt deſperate of the three. As he was very ſtrong and bulky, he deſpiſed his adverſary, and thought ſoon to finiſh him: but he was much miſtaken; for Rigby was an excellent cudgel-player, and withal, ſo nimble and alert, that he ſoon convinced his antagoniſt he was, at leaſt, a match for him. In the mean time the other, who had been knocked down, recovered. And now the combat was renewed with greater fury than ever: Rigby's ally ſtill keeping two of them in play, while he was endeavouring to diſable the third. Already had he given him three or four ſmart ſtrokes that made him feel the ſtick, but none ſufficiently powerful to bring him down: at length an opening preſented itſelf, and Rigby, collecting all his force, by one judicious blow, laid him bleeding and ſenſeleſs on the ground. He lent his ſpeedy aſſiſtance to the ſtranger, and, unperceived, knocked one of the others down: and the third truſted to his ſafety in a good pair of heels, which conveyed him, with great expedition, from the field of battle.

"Sir," ſaid Rigby, "we had better ſecure theſe "fellows, now they are in our power.

"Let

"Let me aſk them a queſtion firſt," replied the ſtranger, with a great deal of compoſure. They were now riſen, and, from the treatment they had met with, very little inclined to renew the engagement. "I will give you your liberty," ſaid he to them, "if you will anſwer me one queſtion faithfully." They promiſed they would. "Did not Sir Andrew employ you to do this?"

They declared he had.

"Then fly," ſaid he, "and tell him this is the third time: and now let *him* take care."

They did not wait a ſecond bidding, but ſtruck into a path that led acroſs the wood, and vaniſhed in a hurry.

"Young gentleman," ſaid the ſtranger, with much calmneſs and deliberation, "your behaviour has been very generous and gallant. I thank you for it; but don't let me hinder you in your journey. I am going to the next town to dinner, and if you are going that way, I'll accompany you; it is but two miles diſtant."

Rigby agreed, and taking the bridle of his horſe in his hand, they walked on together. And now he had an opportunity to obſerve his fellow-traveller: he ſeemed about thirty; though he was really younger he was tall and well-built; was active and reſolute, and from what Rigby could obſerve, he was as indifferent and calm when attacked, as when he was not. His face was tolerably good: but there was a ferocity and ſternneſs in his countenance that gave him an appearance of horror. His features aſſumed an inflexible ſeverity: and an eternal frown, that ſettled on his brow, added to the extraordinary effect which his eyes, ſparkling with uncommon vivacity and wildneſs, had upon the beholder.

Rigby entered into converſation with him, and could not help aſking him about the cauſe of his being

ing thus aſſaulted, which he ſeemed very well acquainted with.

The ſtranger replied, he knew the reaſon very well, and had been uſed in that manner twice before, but he would ſoon turn the tables. As he ſeemed to avoid being particular, Rigby declined aſking him any more queſtions: he therefore changed the ſubject, and they chatted very freely together on indifferent topicks; and Mr. Hillaſton, for that was the ſtranger's name, ſhewed that he had read much in his time: but there was a ſingularity in his manner of thinking, and expreſſing thoſe thoughts, that both pleaſed and ſurpriſed our traveller. They ſoon arrived at the town where they propoſed dining, and accordingly ſat down to a comfortable repaſt. Hillaſton had learn'd from Rigby where he was going, and his deſign of taking orders: he therefore aſſured him he would call and ſee him at Cambridge before it was long. Rigby alſo told him that he ſhould be very glad to ſee him: they drank their pint of wine, and parted with mutual promiſes of regard, and a deſire to meet again.

As Rigby proceeded, he could not help acknowledging to himſelf a curioſity to know the cauſe of the profound melancholy that affected his new acquaintance. He obſerved him to ſigh very frequently: and never could he perceive that his features were relaxed into a ſmile. His calmneſs and indifference ſeemed rather the conſequence of deſpair, than that determined and immoveable reſolution, which is true heroiſm; he therefore hoped he would be as good as his word, and pay him a viſit at Cambridge, where he arrived that night, that he might learn the cauſe of ſuch extraordinary conduct.

In about two months he came, according to promiſe, and Rigby expreſſed much ſatisfaction at ſeeing him.

" How

" How did you come, Mr. Hillaſton?

" On foot; this ſtaff is the only horſe that I make " uſe of; and in this manner I travel all through " England—I am ſeldom at home."

" That muſt be very pleaſant—"

" Yes," ſaid he, " to thoſe who can enjoy it; " but I always go alone."

In this viſit he opened ſomewhat of his character to Rigby, who found him a man poſſeſſed of the nobleſt and moſt generous ſentiments. But ſome accident had embittered the happineſs of his days, had caſt a gloom over his countenance, and induced a ſeverity in his manners that ſeemed foreign to him, and was diſagreeable to every body elſe. Nothing could alter his behaviour: and he appeared, from ſome flightineſſes, to be actually diſordered in his mind.

He informed Rigby, that he had an eſtate of between four and five hundred a year on the borders of that county; but, of all places on earth, there was none where there was leſs probability of finding him than at home. Rigby remarked, when he left him to himſelf, that he was tolerably communicative, but always waved anſwering any queſtions. He therefore ſeemed to be pleaſed with Rigby's conduct in that particular.

On the third day of his ſtay with him, as ſome talk led him to that ſubject, he aſked him if he was married? Hillaſton ſtarted at the ſound, looked very attentively at him for a ſmall time, and ſtretched out his hand, as a token of amity to him.

" Now," ſaid he, " I muſt bid you farewell; but " I will come and ſee you ſoon again."

Without waiting for a reply, he went away, fetching a deep ſigh, that was heard very plainly. This conduct corroborated Rigby's ſuſpicions of his infani-

ty:

ty: and he concluded him to be ſome unhappy man croſſ.d in love; and that his aſking that queſtion ſo *mal a propos* had a bad effect on him: for this reaſon, he determined never to make another enquiry concerning his affairs, when it only ſerved to render him outrageous.

He did not remain long abſent from Rigby. He ſpent a day with him, and uſed to viſit him frequently between that time and the ſeaſon in which he had appointed to return to Berkſhire. Still no alteration or difference could be perceived, either in his face or manner, ſave that he was ſometimes more flighty and abſtracted than at others, and that he indicated great and frequent tokens of friendſhip and affection for Rigby; who pitied his diſtraction, and began to like the man. He propoſed, as ſome relief to him, to accompany him into Berkſhire; and Hillaſton very willingly conſented.

As they were talking of their intended journey, and the conveyance they ſhould make uſe of, Hillaſton propoſed to walk it;—"for," ſaid he, "that "is my uſual method of travelling; and, I aſſure "you, it is very entertaining."

"I do not in the leaſt doubt it," replied Rigby; "but there is one inconvenience attending it, which "I do not know how to remedy, or I ſhould like "ſuch a ſcheme very well.—What ſhall we do for "linen?"

"That will not prevent us; I have ſeveral houſes "on the road, where I leave my ſhirts, and we ſhall "contrive to do very well. I have ſhirts and ſtock-"ings in the moſt diſtant parts of England. I have "an incredible number of them; and, as I leave "them in different places, I have no occaſion to "load myſelf with the carriage of them."

Rigby confeſſed the juſtice of the obſervation; and, when the time came, they ſet off together, having

ing ſent their cloaths and other things to London, to be forwarded for them to the place of their deſtination.

Rigby expected much pleaſure from this journey, as well from the novelty of it, as the ſingular character of his companion, whom he looked upon as mad, though not miſchievouſly ſo. His total indifference to every external object made him conclude his mind was intenſely fixed upon ſomething which he could not even gueſs at, and which he ſuppoſed to be the cauſe of his diſtraction. He ſeemed equally unmoved by pleaſure or pain; yet he talked very frequently in the moſt ſenſible and feeling manner; and his ſentiments beſpoke nice and uncommon notions of honour and juſtice: and, indeed, to confeſs the truth, Rigby did not like him a bit the worſe for entertaining ſuch, though they bordered a little upon the romantic, and were very foreign to the habits and cuſtoms of the modern world. Hillaſton, in calculating the places where he had left his ſhirts, that they might be regularly ſupplied with linnen, was obliged to lead his companion a little out of the way; but as they had time enough upon their hands that circumſtance was very immaterial. Agreeable chat beguiled the way, and Rigby conceived a very pleaſing idea of their future journey.

They had dined with great ſatisfaction, their frugal repaſt being rendered delicious to them by a good appetite, and they ſet out for the place which they purpoſed ſleeping at that night, about twelve miles diſtant. Their road lay acroſs a little but deep river, which being ſome time before much ſwoln with mountain floods, had waſhed away part of the bridge, and the inhabitants had erected a wooden one to preſerve the communication for horſes and foot paſſengers only. Juſt as our travellers arrived at this bridge, a young lad, decently dreſſed, on horſe-back

was coming towards them; but being mounted on a young ſkittiſh horſe, he was ſo much terrified at the ſound his feet made on the boards of the bridge, that he began to rear and plunge with great fury. His rider could neither get him backwards or forwards: and giving him the whip and ſpur too freely, the beaſt made one furious effort, and threw this unfortunate young man fairly over the rails of the bridge, which were very low. Our travellers could afford him no aſſiſtance whilſt he maintained the ſtruggle with his horſe; but as ſoon as Hillaſton ſaw the accident, he dropped his ſtaff in the road, and with as much compoſure as if he was going to ſtep into a carriage, ſlipped of his coat and waiſtcoat, and threw himſelf over the bridge after him. The horſe, terrified at the noiſe of his jumping into the water, ſtood ſtock ſtill: Rigby immediately ſeized and ſecured him by the bridle; then jumping over the ditch, ran along the ſide of the river to be ready to aſſiſt his friend. Hillaſton obſerved the ſpot where the young man was thrown: and being an expert ſwimmer he ſeized him as he roſe ſenſeleſs with the fright and the fall, and ſupported him till he got to land where Rigby ſtood. They rolled him about, and holding him by his heels made him diſgorge the water he had ſwallowed; and in a little time reſtored him to life. When he came to be informed of the generoſity of his deliverer, he was unbounded in his thanks and acknowledgments; and acquainting our friend that his father was a farmer at a ſmall diſtance, entreated him to go home along with him that he might get dry cloaths. This he refuſed very ſtrongly. They helped him on his horſe, which they led over the bridge, as he ſaid he muſt return home after that accident, and renewed his entreaties to the gentlemen to go with him.

"Boy,"

" Boy," ſaid Hillaſton, with an unuſual ſeverity of aſpect, " go home, and be thankful for this eſcape; " perhaps, it had been better for thee if thou hadſt " not been ſaved, you would have experienced leſs " miſery—Now leave us."

The boy expreſſed his ſorrow at his refuſal; and repeating his thanks, rode off as faſt as he could. Rigby inſiſted on carrying his companion's coat and waiſtcoat till his ſhirt dried at leaſt. The other oppoſed it, but was at laſt obliged to ſubmit to his friend. They walked on at a good round pace to prevent cold having any effect; and Rigby could not help remarking to himſelf, that he had obſerved no change in the viſage of his companion either when he ſaw the young lad thrown into the river, when he ruſhed in to ſave him, or when he had recovered him to life. This increaſed his ſurprize, and deſire to develope his character.

When they had proceeded about five miles in this manner, they perceived the lad whom they had relived, and an elderly, well-looking man, whom they ſuppoſed to be his father, ſtanding in the road, and near them a ſervant, holding three horſes. As they approached them, the father ran towards Hillaſton, yet in his ſhirt, and throwing his arms around him, claſped him to his boſom.——" Excuſe my tran- " ſports, Sir," ſaid the old man (the big tears dropping from his eyes) " you have ſaved my life in my " child's——you have ſaved his mother's too. De- " prived of our only remaining comfort, we ſhould " have ſpent the remainder of our days in miſery: " But you are our deliverer. Come then, I beſeech " you, come, with your friend, and receive the " thanks of the poor mother, who longs to ſee the " ſaviour of her child. Come, and let us have your " company for one night at leaſt."

When

When he had done ſpeaking, Hillaſton ſurveyed him very attentively for about half a minute; then replied, in a deliberate and ſtern voice——"Friend, "thou haſt got thy ſon—be contented—thank not "me—but thank the Omnipotent, that ſent me in a "way to relieve him, and gave me the diſpoſition "to do it. Now return to your houſe, and be joy-"ful with your friends. I delight not in mirth.—"Farewell."

He puſhed the old man gently aſide, and ſtrode off with great celerity; leaving the boy and his father equally aſtoniſhed at his generoſity and moroſeneſs. Rigby, who was alſo much ſurprized, told them, that he was ſorry he could not partake of their happineſs for their reſtored child, but was obliged to follow his companion. They wiſhed him a good walk, and he haſtened after his companion as faſt as he could. He did not come within ſight of him for a long time; at laſt, he perceived him ſitting by the ſide of the road, at the foot of a hill. As Rigby approached him he ſtarted up, and thanking him for the trouble he had taken in carrying his cloaths, put them on; and they proceeded together very ſociably, as he forbore to aſk him any queſtions about his behaviour, till they reached the town of ——, and, at the ſign of the Sun, took up their quarters for the enſuing night.

Rigby ſoon perceived that Hillaſton was no ſtranger in the houſe. They paid him all the reſpect and attention imaginable. Every thing he deſired was done immediately; and, in preference to any other perſon's commands, his were obeyed. However, he thought the landlord and his wife looked very ſtrangely on them, and what it was owing to he knew not. While their ſupper was preparing, Hillaſton aſked concerning their beds: and Rigby obſerved, that a room with two beds in it would ſerve them.

But

But he ſaw with ſurprize the landlord, who, from his ſize, and the volubility of his tongue, ſuppoſed himſelf a very ſenſible and important fellow, nodding and frowning at him very ſignificantly; and then, looking at his wife, ſaid, they had no ſuch room empty, but they had ſingle-bedded rooms enough.

"Well, that will do very well," replied Hillaſton.

Mine hoſt, ſeeing Rigby amazed at this behaviour, gave him a ſly beckon, and going out, was followed by him.

"Lord bleſs me! Sir," ſaid the landlord, do you "know who you have got with you?"

"Not very well," replied Rigby.

"Aye, I thought ſo, by your aſking for a two-"bedded room.—Why, he'd have cut your throat "in the night.—But perhaps he is coming," added he, looking very cautiouſly about—"Do you come "down when he is in bed, and my miſtreſs and I "will tell you more of him.—You ſeem a good-na-"tured, civil gemman, and—but mum's the word," ſaid he clapping the fore-finger of his right-hand to his noſe—"you ſhall know all—that's enough—— "Remember."

Rigby promiſed he would, and returned to his companion.

Though he had no great opinion of his landlord's wiſdom, yet, as he was longer acquainted with Hillaſton than himſelf, he might learn ſome information from him, that would lead to the diſcovery he wanted to make. He therefore waited with ſome impatience, till it was time to retire to reſt; and the more eſpecially as Hillaſton was remarkably grave and ſilent all the evening. It came at laſt: and taking candles, they each repaired to their reſpective apartments. Rigby ſoon returned to the room where he had left the landlord waiting for him.

"Well,

" Well, Sir," ſays mine hoſt of the Sun, " you " have diſpoſed of that mad gem-man—that's very " well; for I believe he's a dangerous man."

" Aye—I hope not."

" Yes, that he is, as I'll tell you.——You muſt " know that—But ſorrow's very dry, maſter; ſup- " poſe we had a drop of warm punch; my miſtreſs " has as good a finger at punch-making as any ſhe " in the hundred."

" Let ſome be made," ſaid Rigby, "by all means."

" Here, miſtreſs, make half a crown's worth of " punch, let it be righteous, d'ye hear, half and " half, hot; and bring it in yourſelf."

" And pray, landlord, how long is it ſince you " have known this gentleman."

" Three years next Lammas—Lammas——No, " Martlemas I mean—And he has been here twen- " ty times ſince, I dare ſay: and would you believe " it, I never once ſaw him laugh or even ſmile, " though I have ſtrove to make him do it.——No, " maſter, no, he's melancholy mad: but he does a " deal of miſchief to ſome folks, though in the main " he's harmleſs enough. We've a parcel of ſhirts " of his in the houſe, and ſo as he goes by, he calls " in and takes one and leaves another."

Here the communicative hoſt was interrupted by the entrance of his wife with the bowl of punch; which her huſband having taſted, and declared his approbation of, ſhe drew her chair to the table, and the converſation was renewed.

" And what miſchief has he done that you know " of?"

" Oh, a mortal deal," replied the hoſteſs: the " people hereabouts are deadly afraid of him, for " they ſay he has ſeen a ghoſt, and that it follows " him."

" Hold

" Hold your fooliſh chatter. I'll tell you, maſter.
" Here's your health—To be ſure thof' he be mad,
" he always behaves very civilly here, and pays his
" money like a gemman, and what's every body's
" buſineſs is no body's buſineſs, as the ſaying is.—
" But about the miſchief—O!—Why you muſt
" know Sir, that about a ſmall mile out of this
" town, is 'Squire Cockſedge's eſtate, good nine
" hundred a year as ever crow flew over: and the
" living is worth two more; and a very worthy
" gemman had it to be ſure, that was this young
" 'Squire's father's tutor, and ſo he gave him the
" living——Well this gemman had one daughter
" about ſixteen years old when he died: and a ſweet
" pretty creature ſhe was, as ever the ſun ſhone
" upon—and the young Squire was very fond of
" her, as the talk went. This parſon died about
" three years agone, and he had purchaſed a little
" bit of an eſtate, about fifty or ſixty pounds a year,
" where the widow and her daughter lived: ſo the
" young 'Squire had been very thick at the parſon's
" when he was alive, and he uſed to go and ſee
" them after his death; and as the ſtory goes, he
" got her belly up: to be ſure he's as likely a young
" fellow as you would ſee in a thouſand; a liſſome,
" tight, clean made youth, to be ſure: it was only
" a report d'ye ſee, for I can't or wou'dn't ſay ſo
" for my right hand: becauſe why? both the
" 'Squire and his Lady uſe the houſe now. So, ſoon
" after, the old 'Squire died, and as he was the
" only child he got all; and then it ſeems he would
" not marry the parſon's daughter—for why ſhould
" he? you know—becauſe ſhe had no fortune; and
" a crack'd pitcher, you know, eh—" ſaid he, with
a horſe-laugh.

" That's the reaſon he oft," replied the wife.

" You're a fool," ſaid he, " and don't know no-

" thing

" thing—So the poor girl, it ſeems, took on piteouſ-
" ly, and did nothing but cry : and the people
" thought as how ſhe wou'd break her heart, as the
" ſtory goes—This was about a year and a half
" ago : and about that time too, this mad gemman
" came down here in his walks, for I never ſaw him
" with a horſe in my life--So he heard of this affair ſome
" how or other, by hook or by crook, and it ſeems
" he went to the widow's, and ſpoke to the women
" folk : and then he went to the 'Squire's, and there it
" ſeems, as John the footman told me, they talked
" together for a great while, the 'Squire and he—
" and ſometimes were very loud : and at laſt they
" came to blows : and our madman thraſhed the
" 'Squire very ſoundly, and then he helped him up
" to bed, but he wou'dn't let the ſervants touch
" 'un, for as John ſaid, there was enough o' them
" to have broke every bone in his body : ſo then he
" came that night, and ſlept here, and the next day
" he went again to the 'Squire's ; and ſo he went
" backwards and forwards, and to the great aſton-
" iſhment of every body the next Sunday they were
" married together—To be ſure ſhe's a main good
" woman, and every body loves her, for ſhe's very
" good to the poor——And ſo this mad gemman
" wou'dn't go and ſtay with them, though they
" wou'd have given him gold if he cou'd eat it—
" and they uſed to leave word with me to tell him
" when he came here, that they wanted to ſee
" him : and I uſed to tell him, and he never wou'd
" go : and at laſt threaten'd me that he wou'd lick
" me, if I ever told him again of it—I ſhou'dn't be
" affear'd o' that, for I am as good a man as he, if
" ſo be he was not mad : So here's t'ye, maſter ?"

" And do you call this doing miſchief ?"

" To be ſure : for its bad enough to marry
" where one has an inclination, not where one
" has not, and without any money too."

And now mine hoſt, who knew nothing of Hillaſton, but as a mad man and a traveller who frequented his houſe, began to think himſelf entitled to aſk Rigby his opinion of him, and how long he had known him: but all theſe queſtions were anſwered, very little to the ſatisfaction of the inquiſitive landlord, who told ſome other ſtories of the freaks of Mr. Hillaſton, which confirmed Rigby in his good opinion of the man whoſe brain was diſtracted, and who did, and wiſhed to do good, though his manner of doing it was very extraordinary. It then occurred to him to aſk his hoſt, what reaſon he had for ſaying that his companion would cut his throat?

The other replied, that he looked upon him as very mad, and that as he was the only perſon that ever he had ſeen with him, he did not know but he was acquainted with him. But he diſguiſed the truth, which was he thought to pick out from Rigby ſome account of his companion: but that he found was impoſſible They therefore parted mutually diſſatisfied, though Rigby was much better pleaſed than the landlord: who declared it as his opinion to his wife, that he believed that young man was little better than a fool, for if he had travelled with him ſo long, he would have known every thing about him.

Rigby was not a little diverted the next morning, when he and his friend were preparing for their departure, to ſee the diligence and attention of the landlord and his wife; which Rigby imputed to the right cauſe, fear: for mine hoſt did not like to encounter a mad man; and ſeemed to be very happy when they left the houſe, wiſhing them a good journey, with great politeneſs and good humour. The ſecond day's journey was not interrupted by any accident; but in every houſe where Hillaſton was known, Rigby perceived that they all joined in an

opinion

opinion of his insanity. He was very agreeably entertained by his companion, whose singular remarks had much variety in them, and shewed a strong judgment and good understanding, mixed with a great knowledge of men and things. He found he had been abroad: for these matters were all spontaneously communicated to him; and his want of curiosity seemed to please Hillaston much; who related several little adventures of his to Rigby, and gave him accounts of those places at which he had been abroad; making judicious and amusing comparisons between them and the country he was then in. Rigby found him an entertaining and instructive companion; and he liked Rigby's prudence and good nature, that suffered him to pursue his own fancy without interruption.

On the evening of the sixth day they arrived at Mr. Wilkins's; and, as the family had been taught to expect a friend whom Rigby was to bring along with him, every thing was prepared to receive them with the warmest welcome. People in general adapt their behaviour to strangers, from the impression their countenance has on them. With those who look like goodhumoured persons, they are free and unreserved: But the gloom and severity so visible on Hillaston's brow cast a damp over the spirits of the whole family; and Rigby perceived it with concern. Taking Wilkins aside, he told him, he believed his guest was a little disordered in his mind; but that he was a very well disposed and benevolent kind of man; that it would make him very unhappy, if he took any notice of him, but let him pursue his own way; and that the family should just behave as if he was not there. The same lesson he gave to his mother and Mrs. Wilkins, who soon resumed their former behaviour: and Hillaston, finding he was not particularly observed, began to unbend himself a little,

tle, and became in ſome meaſure agreeable to the women, notwithſtanding his forbidding countenance.

Rigby, ſoon after his arrival, went to pay his compliments to Mrs. Wilcox. It was near nine months ſince ſhe had ſeen him before; and ſhe welcomed him in a manner that beſpoke her regard for him. With her was Miſs Bennet, whoſe good opinion of her couſin, from the time ſhe firſt ſaw her, had ripened into a ſincere and laſting friendſhip. At the ſight of Rigby, ſhe could ſcarcely conceal her emotions. The heart unuſed to falſhood and deception, cannot diſguiſe its feelings; and even when an attempt is made to do ſo, the veil is ſo thin, that it is eaſily ſeen through. Her perturbation, at the unexpected ſight of the man whom ſhe had ſo frequently thought and talked of in his abſence, threw her into great agitations. But they were entirely unobſerved by him who cauſed them: for he had no notion that every woman who ſaw him muſt neceſſarily and abſolutely be in love with him, Mrs. Wilcox inſiſted upon her viſitor's ſtaying to dinner: he complied; and ſoon after, Mr. Wilcox returned home from his uncle's, where he had been that day. He expreſſed great pleaſure at ſeeing Rigby; and welcomed him very heartily to the country again: aſſured him, that he was happier now than ever: and to his reſolution he was indebted for it. "And "you ſee, Rigby," ſaid he, "we ſhall have an in-"creaſe in our family ſoon;" pointing to his wife, who began to ſhew very round about the waiſt.

"May it increaſe your happineſs too," ſaid Rigby.

"I have no doubt of it," returned Wilcox; "and my worthy uncle's generoſity has placed it on "a permanent footing."

"But we ſhall have another wedding ſoon. Our couſin Lydia will be lady Crawford in a few days."

"I aſſure

"I aſſure you, Mr. Wilcox," replied Miſs Bennet, aſſuming more ſpirit than uſual upon this occaſion, "that your intelligence wants confirmation."

As ſhe ſpoke, a bluſh covered her face. Wilcox laughed loudly at her pretended delicacy; and his wife wore a very ſignificant ſmile. Rigby, who was not in the ſecret, wiſhed her every happineſs that the nuptial ſtate could afford her, whenever ſhe entered into it. This addreſs only ſerved to pique her the more; and ſhe replied, that ſhe was much obliged to him for his good wiſhes.

When Wilcox and his wife preſſed Rigby to come and ſee them frequently, he informed them of his having a companion with him in the country, whom he had brought from Cambridge. They deſired that might be no prevention; for they ſhould be very glad to ſee any friend of his. He thanked them, and departed.

He was received in the moſt friendly manner alſo at Mr. Bennet's, to whom he introduced Hillaſton; and ſoon after took him to Mr. Wilcox's. As he had prepared the way for his reception, his ſilence and ſingularity were not ſo much obſerved; and having nothing to provoke his ſpleen or reſentment, he became a ſociable creature; and, though not ſo agreeable as the ladies could wiſh, yet he was not intolerable.

BOOK VI.

HILLASTON, who went under the name of the Mad Gentleman, in the country, uſed to take many ſolitary walks; and in a ſhort time knew

the country all over; and, having told his friend that he had occaſion to go home, promiſed ſoon to return again; and accordingly ſet out on his intended journey. In his abſence, Rigby went to ſee his old friend Mrs. Wilcox; and found Sir Thomas Crawford there who, as he was informed, was an admirer of Miſs Bennet. His character, fortune, and perſon, were unexceptionable; and as his propoſals to Mr. Bennet were very generous, he was received on the moſt favourable footing by the father. If any thing, he was rather too old for his daughter, being near thirty: except that, and a want of inclination for him, ſhe could have no reaſonable objection to comply with her father's wiſhes. Mrs. Wilcox could not at firſt give any gueſs at the cauſe why ſhe obſtinately ſhunned Sir Thomas. She hardly ever would remain with him alone; expreſſing her diſlike of him in private to her, and in public declaring to him her averſion to matrimony. Sir Thomas, who had good friends in Mr. Bennet, and in Wilcox and his wife, determined, by aſſiduity and true affection, to remove, if poſſible, her objections; nor could her couſin conceive why ſhe ſhould refuſe to be Lady Crawford. The cauſe was yet a ſecret; but as women, perhaps from a ſimilarity of ſentiment, can ſooner perceive what paſſes in each others breaſts, and find out the motives that actuate their conduct, ſooner than the other ſex; ſo Mrs. Wilcox thought ſhe had penetrated into the myſtery, but waited for further proofs, before ſhe acquainted her couſin with her ſuſpicions.

The viſit of Rigby, when Sir Thomas Crawford was in the preſence of his miſtreſs, ſettled the affair at once. The candid and ingenuous Lydia was much diſtreſſed, in the thoughts of receiving a perſon well whom ſhe could not bear, and appearing cool and indifferent to him who really, though ignorantly, poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed her heart. She therefore could not help treating Sir Thomas with a ſeverity and pride ſhe had never ſhewn before : her conduct had ever indicated more indifference and careleſſneſs than thorough diſlike ; but now it was intirely altered.

Mrs. Wilcox was not long at a loſs for the reaſons of this change : and as ſhe had a great eſteem for the man who had ſo generouſly and unſolicited eſpouſed her cauſe, and procured her happineſs, ſhe was not diſpleaſed at theſe tokens of her couſin's regard for him : but ſhe determined to draw them from her own mouth : and the next day, when they were alone, ſhe went into the kitchen, and returning after a ſhort ſtay to the parlour, where Miſs Bennet was, and affecting an air of concern and ſurpriſe, " Lord, my dear, I have heard very diſagreeable " news."

" What is it ?"

" Poor Mr. Rigby, going from hence laſt night was thrown from his horſe, and hurt himſelf dangerouſly."

Lydia ſtarted from her ſeat, and in the agony of her heart claſped her hands together and exclaimed, " Oh, my God !" then falling into her chair again, pale and almoſt lifeleſs, fainted away.

Mrs. Wilcox had no power to tell her that ſhe was deceived, ſo much was ſhe agitated, and ſhe heartily repented her putting her ſcheme in agitation. Terrified as ſhe was, yet ſhe gave every aſſiſtance in her power, and when ſhe was recovered entreated her to forgive her.

" For what ?" ſaid Lydia.

" For frightening you thus. But I aſſure you " that I would not have done ſo if I thought it " would have had ſuch a violent and inſtant effect " upon you, for it was only a ſcheme to find out " whether ſome ſuſpicions of mine were juſt or not."

" Ah,"

" Ah," ſaid Lydia, the whiteneſs of her cheeks changing to a faint red, " why have you thus diſ-
" treſſed me ? Why would you employ ſo cruel an
" artifice to expoſe me ?"

" Indeed, my dear couſin, I confeſs that it was
" cruel, and I have been very heartily frightened
" by it ; but a woman's curioſity you know will
" carry her a great length, and mine is ſatisfi-
" ed. If I had attempted to have drawn the ſecret
" of your heart from you in any other manner,
" there would have been ſome room for equivocati-
" on, and I never ſhould have been thoroughly ac-
" quainted with it—But now—

" Aye, now indeed you have learned my folly
" and unhappineſs. But do not," added ſhe with a ſigh, " do not let my weakneſs be known, I beſeech
" you."

Mrs. Wilcox aſſured her ſhe might depend upon her prudence and ſecreſy, promiſing her faithfully to conceal this matter even from her huſband.

Lydia forgave her the deceit that extorted the confeſſion of her affection for Rigby from her ; and when ſhe had recovered from the fright, found that ſhe was benefited by the diſcovery, as ſhe could now talk freely to her friend concerning her ſituation, and open her heart without reſerve : by her means too Rigby was frequently invited over to ſee them, and ſhe was indulged in the enjoyment of his company and converſation. This gave her great pleaſure in one ſenſe, while it made her unhappy in another. Much ſatisfaction aroſe from the ſight of the object of her regard ; but he was unconſcious of it, and ſhe had the mortification to ſee him totally indifferent, whilſt her own apprehenſive delicacy forbade her to ſhew him the leaſt preference, and ſhe trembled leſt an unguarded word or action ſhould lead him to the knowledge of what paſſed in her diſtracted boſom.

Mrs.

Mrs. Wilcox was not without hope, but, by frequently ſeeing and converſing with the amiable and ſenſible Lydia, Rigby's heart would be touched, or that he would perceive ſome ſmall indications of her ſentiments ſo favourable to him, which would be ſufficient to embolden him to open his heart to her. But the ſeaſon wore away in that manner, and they ſaw him prepare for his departure with great anxiety.

Hillaſton had returned again to Rigby within a fortnight, and as he was treated in a manner that pleaſed him at the farmer's, he conceived a great liking and friendſhip for the whole family. Wilkins's eldeſt daughter, between ſeventeen and eighteen, was a great favourite of his: he liked the innocence of her deportment, the ſimplicity of her manner, and the ingenuouſneſs of her mind. Frequently had he, in his ſtern and uncouth way, given her the moſt wholeſome advice. She was pretty, and the precepts and example of her mother and Mrs. Rigby had fortified her mind with leſſons of virtue. Her little heart was grateful to Hillaſton for his good-nature and friendſhip; and ſhe lamented his diſtraction, while ſhe admired his ſentiments. The truth was, ſhe had been educated rather above the ſphere of the farmer's daughters in that country, and Hillaſton thought her an object that would tempt the deſire of ſome country 'Squire or other. An intimacy had ſubſiſted between the Wilkins family and that of one Mr. Pitman, a neighbouring gentleman farmer, ever ſince the former ſettled in Berkſhire. He was a man of ſtrict integrity, had an eſtate of about two hundred and fifty pounds a year, and rented a farm of about four hundred more. He had two daughters, and as many ſons; the eldeſt of whom was a country beau. His father bred him up entirely in the knowledge of agriculture: and he had made as many conqueſts among the fair ruſtics,

as

as his brother fops have done among the dames of quality in the town. They lived between five and fix miles from Wilkins's houſe; and in the frequent viſits of the girls backwards and forwards he fixed the eyes of affection upon Hannah Wilkins, and ſhe did not diſlike the ſmart appearance of Tom Pitman. Hillaſton had ſeen them often together, obſerved the ſymptoms of mutual regard, and had conceived no very good opinion of young Pitman; but he would not attempt to ſay any thing to Hannah about it, and therefore was ſilent till he ſaw whether his ſuſpicions would be confirmed or not. During the fortnight that he had been abſent the Miſs Pitmans made a viſit at Mr. Wilkins's, and ſtaid there a week, the brother coming over occaſionally to ſee them: when they went away, Mrs. Wilkins promiſed to let Hannah go and ſtay with them, but could not ſpare her younger daughter at the ſame time; therefore ſoon after Hillaſton returned ſhe went over to Pitman's. During her reſidence there it entered into Hillaſton's head, that this would be a good opportunity for young Pitman to improve with the credulous and innocent Hannah. He would not make the good people unhappy by communicating his opinion of Tom Pitman, whoſe principles he deteſted; but on the afternoon of the day on which ſhe had appointed to come home, and which ſhe could not break through, he ſet out with an intention to meet her on the road. On that afternoon too Hannah Wilkins, attended by the two Miſs Pitmans, and their brother, alſo ſet out for Mr. Wilkins's. It was the intention of the two girls to ſee their companion half way, which they accordingly did, and then took their leaves, after recommending her to the care of their brother, and proceeded homewards.

Pitman

Pitman was now in the ſituation he wiſhed. He had not failed to improve the many opportunities that her ſtay at his father's had afforded him; and but too ſucceſsful had he been in perſuading the unſuſpecting Hannah that he was doatingly fond of her, found the way to pleaſe her, and ſhe really loved him. How difficult is it for a girl who loves to keep within the ſtrait line of diſcretion, to repel the approaches of a man who is dear to her! Hannah, though pure as the fallen ſnow in heart and intention, yet was not able to treat her admirer with proper ſeverity: and while ſhe was giving him proofs of her regard, was betraying herſelf: and his guilty heart, at that inſtant, was planning ſchemes for her overthrow. To be left alone with her therefore in this manner was extremely agreeable to him: nor was it diſpleaſing to her to be in ſuch a ſituation with him, that ſhe could hear his vows without interruption. She leaned upon his arm to help her in her walk; and he breathed forth his affection for her with great volubility and earneſtneſs. She liſtened with attention, and believed it all. How inſatuating are the honied words of thoſe we love! Convinced of his paſſion by his proteſtations, her heart underwent unuſual palpitations. Dangerous deluſion! They were to paſs through the ſkirt of a wood in their road home. They had juſt entered it—Pitman made a ſtumble: he had ſprained his ancle, as he pretended. The compaſſionate Hannah entreated him to ſit till he recovered himſelf. No, he would go on: but he was prevailed on at laſt, and a green-ſod ſeat, that naturally roſe round the foot of an oak, very fortunately preſented itſelf: thither they retired and repoſed themſelves. The tender Hannah lamented the accident in the moſt pitiful manner, the lover made light of it, rubbed his ancle, and declared it would ſoon be well. "But,"

ſaid

ſaid he, "you can give me a ſpeedy cure for it—a "balmy kiſs."

A kiſs could not be refuſed; but that afforded ſuch exquiſite delight, he muſt have another. Weak was the reſiſtance which poor Hannah made to the familiarities, yet conſiſtent with virtue, which Pitman attempted. Her condeſcenſion, and the good opinion ſhe had of him, threw her more off her guard: and now was the time to uſe that gentle force with which he had already triumphed over many victims of his paſſion: he accordingly began the attack, and proceeded to lengths which alarmed Hannah, and which ſhe repulſed with a proper and becoming ſpirit. Tom knew this was a loneſome place: and his favourite maxim was, which experience had confirmed, that women muſt be forced to what they like; and accordingly he determined to make the beſt of his time and opportunity. Poor Hannah, who found herſelf overpowered by his ſtrength, added ſcreams to her ſtruggles in hopes of drawing ſome aſſiſtance to her. Weak and breathleſs, her reſiſtance grew fainter: and he had almoſt effected his purpoſe, when Hillaſton, who had heard ſomebody's cries, appeared in ſight; but knowing Hannah's dreſs made up to the ſpot where Pitman had deſigned to triumph over her.

"Oh, Mr. Hillaſton," ſaid ſhe, "I am very "glad to ſee you."

"Perhaps you may not," ſaid he with his uſual compoſure: "but, inſolent boy, what is the rea- "ſon you have treated this girl in ſo baſe a man- "ner?"

"What is that to you," replied Pitman, "if I "had a mind to it?"

"I will tell you what it is to me," replied he, knitting his brows, his eyes glaring with uncommon ferocity: "that girl has been impoſed on by "you, and I ſuſpected it; I therefore wanted to be

"aſſured

" aſſured whether I was right or no. I find I am :
" and therefore not to hurt this fooliſh girl's cha-
" racter, and to preſerve the peace of two families, I
" will puniſh you myſelf for this attempt."

" You muſt be able firſt," ſaid Pitman, whoſe fame at cudgel playing and boxing was known all over the country.

" I'll convince you of that directly," replied Hillaſton, throwing down his hat, and going up to his antagoniſt ; whom, maugre his reſiſtance, he lifted, and daſhed him to the ground.

" Lie there," ſaid he, " till I am at leiſure to
" complete your puniſhment."

Pitman, who was not much hurt, roſe with terms of defiance, and again provoked Hillaſton, who ſoon reduced him to his former ſituation.

" Stir on your peril," ſaid he, " and I will make
" you an example to all raſcals in the county."

Then turning about to a young hazle that was near him, he took out his knife, and began to cut a good ſizeable ſwitch with great deliberation.

Poor Hannah ſat a breathleſs and terrified ſpectator of this ſcene : ſhe would have interpoſed in favour of Pitman, if ſhe dared ; but convinced of her defender's madneſs, ſhe was as much afraid, as if ſhe had offended him.

Pitman, whilſt Hillaſton was clearing the ſwitch which he had cut from the leaves and little twigs, began to conſider that he was in bad hands ; that the ſuperiority of his enemy's ſtrength had been ſufficiently proved ; and that it would be ridiculous to make another trial of it. If therefore he could get the heels of him once, he truſted to his own ſwiftneſs to diſengage him from an adventure which ſeemed likely to terminate in his diſgrace : beſides, he had every thing to fear from the madneſs and deſperation of his foe. He had not ſuffered ſo much from the two falls he had, as to prevent his running ; therefore

therefore, while Hillaſton's back was turned, he roſe on his hands and knees, and, creeping away ſilently, got up and took to his heels with all his ſpeed. Hillaſton turning about miſſed him, and juſt had a ſight of him at a diſtance. He flung down the knife and ſtick, which he had now properly prepared for the purpoſe he deſigned, and with amazing ſpeed purſued the fugitive; who on the other hand, hearing the ſteps of Hillaſton, exerted all his ſtrength and ſwiftneſs. The chaſe did not laſt long; for he was ſoon overtaken.

"Do you mean to murther me?" ſaid Pitman.

"No; I have more regard to myſelf: but I "want to ſhew your miſtreſs what a pretty fellow "attempted to raviſh her."

So ſaying he lugged his priſoner along; who when he attempted to ſtruggle, was told that his reſiſtance would only make him uſe him worſe than he deſigned. The other believed it, and walked back quietly.

When they arrived at the place where Hannah was ſtill ſitting, Hillaſton took up his knife which he put in his pocket very deliberately; then taking the ſwitch alſo, thus addreſſed his companions.

"I believe, Hannah, you are ſufficiently puniſh-"ed for the miſ-placed confidence you had in this "rogue; who taking advantage of your good opi-"nion of him, wanted to rob you of your virgin "honour. You are mortified enough, I fancy: but "you would have been more ſo, when this raſcal, "having compleated your ruin, would have pub-"liſhed your ſhame, and brought ſorrow and diſ-"grace on your unhappy parents. For, be aſſur-"ed, that the man who would make ſuch an attempt "as he has done, would not ſcruple to expoſe you "had he effected it. I know the law would puniſh "him ſeverely for this aſſault; but it would be "detrimental to your character, ſhocking to your "delicacy; and, among the villainous and unthink-

"ing

" ing part of his ſex, he would be applauded, and " you alone would ſuffer. To prevent this ſhall be " my taſk; and I will take care that he ſhall have " no cauſe to boaſt of this evening's ſucceſs.

" As for you, Sir, I ſhall be your beſt friend: " and the timely and ſeaſonable correction I ſhall " give you, will, perhaps, ſave you from exem- " plary puniſhment, for ſome adventures you might " otherwiſe hereafter atchieve. I will ſend you " home as you deſerve, beaten with many ſtripes; " and, inſtead of cauſing ſhame and diſgrace to " fall on her too credulous head, and thoſe of her " innocent and unhappy parents, you ſhall ſuffer in " the fleſh."

So ſaying, he ſeized his right wriſt with his left hand, and puſhing him from him, began to lay on his back, ſhoulders, and arms, with the ſwitch he had; crying at the ſame time, "This will break " no bones."

Shame prevented Pitman's roaring out; but as Hillaſton ſtruck with heart and good will, he writhed and twiſted, from the ſmart occaſioned by the ſtrokes.

The inſtrument of correction ſoon failed: "And " now," ſaid he, "if you ſeek revenge, I aſſure " you, when next I ſee you, this ſhall be a flea- " bite to what you ſhall have. I ſuppoſe ſhame " will prevent your relating this circumſtance, as " you will get no great honour by it. One thing " is, I ſhall conceal it; and I promiſe that Hannah " ſhall —But now you ſee child, what a poor beaten " abject boy this is, who would have deprived you of " your peace for ever.——Go home and mend your " ways."

Pitman took his advice, and went homewards, without ſaying a word to them.

Though heartily incenſed at the treatment he had met with, and ſore with the ſtripes he had received,

he

he found on mature conſideration, that it would not redound to his honour to make the ſtory known; and therefore thought it more prudent to conceal it, and put up with what had happened, rather than either provoke Hillaſton's further wrath, whom he conſidered as a madman, or loſe his character as a clever fellow in the country; which would inevitably be the conſequence, if this affair ſhould come to light.

In the mean time Hillaſton, taking up his ſtaff, aſked Hannah if ſhe was ready to go home. To which ſhe replied, ſhe was; and deſiring her to lean upon his arm, they went homewards. On his way he ordered her not to mention any thing of this affair at home; and repreſented to her, that the world would be apt to ſuppoſe matters had proceeded farther than they really did; and gave her very good advice with regard to her future conduct with Pitman. He ſpoke in the gentleſt and moſt tender manner to her; and, on that occaſion, ſeemed to have thrown aſide that ſternneſs which in every other circumſtance ſo ſtrongly marked his character.

When they arrived at Wilkins's, the appearance of Mr. Hillaſton and Hannah was eaſily accounted for. He met Mr. Pitman and her; and the latter having buſineſs at home, recommended her to his care, and he accordingly conducted her ſafe home. However, Hannah had not got rid of her fright, and ſhe looked pale and ill. This alarmed her mother, who preſſed her to tell her what ailed her: but ſhe refuſed to do ſo, till Mr Hillaſton gave her permiſſion; for ſhe told him ſhe could not think of hiding this affair from her mother. He conſented ſhe ſhould reveal it: and, when Mrs. Wilkins came to thank him, with tears in her eyes, for the kind part he had acted towards her daughter, he told her, he deſired nothing more than that ſhe ſhould conceal it, from her huſband at leaſt, till he was

gone,

gone, and till ſhe ſhould learn whether there was any notice taken of it in the Pitman family. She conſented, and every thing was quiet. Hannah Wilkins, however, could not help informing Rigby of the behaviour of his friend, and he was more aſtoniſhed than ever at the oddity of his manner, while his heart ſeemed fraught with virtuous ſentiments, and his actions teſtified his regard for juſtice. Time only could explain the cauſe of theſe ſeeming contradictions.

As the ſeaſon approached for their return to Cambridge, they prepared for their journey, and performed it in the ſame manner that they came, but without meeting any thing extraordinary. Hillaſton, during the walk, aſſured Rigby of his good opinion of him, and told him he would ſoon give him the greateſt proof of it. He viſited him two or three times after he went to Cambridge. He had been abſent for a month, and his friend could not imagine the cauſe of his long ſtay. At laſt he came, and entering into Rigby's chamber, threw himſelf into a chair, without ſpeaking a word. As he was accuſtomed to do what he pleaſed, Rigby ſaid nothing to him; but looking in his face, perceived a great alteration. Grief and affliction had aſſumed the place of wildneſs and horror, and his whole appearance indicated diſtreſs.—"I fear you are not "well, Hillaſton," ſaid Rigby, "let ſomething be "got for you, and have ſome proper advice."

"Oh," replied he, with a ſigh, that ſeemed to ſhatter all his bulk, "my diſorder is beyond the "reach of medicine or advice. Will phyſic cure "the paſſions? Will it give peace to the ſoul, har-"rowed with guilt? Will it reſtore peace to the "mind, agonized even to diſtraction? Will it eraſe "from my memory the traces of the ſcenes I have "paſſed through? Or will any advice compoſe my "diſturb-

" diſturbed ſpirit ?——No——Anguiſh, ſhame and
" miſery remain for me. Why was I born ? Or
" why do I exiſt ? I ought to have put an end to a
" being that is ſo replete with woe. I have deter-
" mined to open my heart to you, Rigby ; you
" ſhall know the cauſe of my wretchedneſs ; you
" only ſhall know that which is an impenetrable
" myſtery to the reſt of the world.—Lock the door,
" and let no other human ear be acquainted with it.
" Sufficient are my own feelings and remorſe. But,
" Rigby, I fear thou wilt henceforward, deteſt and
" abhor me. Yet, if you do, pity my ſufferings.—
" Guilty though I am, great is my puniſhment,
" and ſeverely do I expiate my crimes. Nature
" which gave me ſtrong paſſions, and formed me
" of a ſanguine diſpoſition, only laid the founda-
" tion of my miſery, and my breaſt is the manſion
" of deſpair. Give me thy attention, my friend,
" if my horrible ſtory will ſuffer you. Oh ! that
" my brain would burſt into madneſs, and then I
" ſhould be relieved. I believe I am flighty ſome-
" times ; the world thinks me a lunatic—Would to
" Heaven I were ſo !"

The tears ſtood in his eyes as he ſpoke ; he covered his face, expreſſive of the ſevereſt and moſt poignant anguiſh, with his hand, and wept aloud. The aſtoniſhed Rigby ſat gazing at him, loſt in ſilent wonder ; his benevolent heart diſſolved with pity.

" This laſt month," ſaid Hillaſton, " I formed
" the deſign of imparting my hiſtory to you ; but
" as no hint tending to a diſcovery of it ever eſcaped
" my lips, it required ſome practice to accuſtom my-
" ſelf to utter them; and inure me to the ſound.
" Since I ſaw you laſt I have walked, notwithſtand-
" ing the ſeverity of the ſeaſon, above three hun-
" dred miles. In the midſt of barren heaths and

" pathleſs

" pathleſs mountains, where no ear heard, and no
" eye ſaw me, I have mingled my complaints with
" the howling of the tempeſt, and have added my
" groans and ſighs to the fury of the ſtorm. I have,
" at length, brought myſelf to bear once more——
" Hear it.

" My father had an eſtate of about ſeven hundred
" pounds a year, upon the borders of this county,
" and in Suffolk, which it joins. He died when I
" was very young, and left me all his property,
" chargeable with a jointure of three hundred
" pounds a year to my mother, and a portion to
" my ſiſter of ſeven thouſand pounds. He had but
" us two. I am the elder by near two years. Our
" infancy paſſed like other children, and was re-
" markable for little elſe than the affection I con-
" ceived for my ſiſter. We were always together,
" and, as we lived retired, had few other com-
" panions.

" When I was ſent to ſchool I always longed to
" be at home with her, and never was ſo happy as
" in her ſociety. This deſire grew upon me; and,
" as I advanced in years, I found it more ſenſibly.
" Her converſation was my greateſt ſatisfaction,
" her company my only enjoyment. The tendereſt
" friendſhip ever ſubſiſted between us; and, under
" that name, the criminal and guilty paſſion which
" has deſtroyed my peace firſt got foundation.

" In due time I was ſent to this univerſity, where
" I was matriculated; and being ſo near home, I
" went frequently thither. Anna was then about
" ſixteen, and her opening charms only added to
" my flame. I dreaded to examine the cauſe of my
" uneaſineſs when I left her, or the pleaſure I felt
" in her preſence: but it was neceſſary that I ſhould
" do ſo; and I trembled with horror at my own
" picture. I tried what abſence would do, and re-

" mained

" mained away ſix months, without ever ſeeing her.
" This behaviour produced ſeveral letters from my
" mother, and ſeveral from my ſiſter, reprehend-
" ing my coolneſs, and chiding me in the moſt
" gentle terms, for abſenting myſelf. The inno-
" cent, the virtuous maid, only ſought the wel-
" fare and pleaſure of her baſe and unnatural bro-
" ther. I obeyed the requeſts contained in theſe
" letters, and returned home. But this viſit ſerved
" more effectally to make me miſerable. I could
" no longer doubt the exiſtence of this fatal paſſion.
" I knew the heinouſneſs of my crime, and endea-
" voured to repreſs all thoughts of it. Unable to
" ſtay any longer in her preſence, I left the arms
" of a tender mother, and the affectionate em-
" braces of a lovely ſiſter, and returned to my
" ſtudies; but in vain did I attempt to apply myſelf
" to them. My diſtracted imagination could receive
" but one idea, and that was the only one which,
" by the laws of ſociety, nature and religion, I was
" forbidden to indulge. Whole days have I ſpent
" in tears, and all night have I lamented my wretch-
" ed ſituation.

" This conflict affected my ſpirits, and brought
" on a ſevere fit of illneſs. Wou'd to God that I
" had died! A long while did I remain delirious,
" and Anna's name was ever in my mouth. When
" I recovered my ſenſes, the firſt object that I ſaw
" was the dear girl at my bedſide, adminiſtring the
" proper things to me that had been ordered. This
" was more than I could bear; yet I firmly believe
" her aſſiſtance contributed to reſtore me to my
" health; but my ſituation was intolerable, and
" the only means of ſafety for me was to fly from
" danger. This reſolution I formed while I was
" yet upon the bed of ſickneſs. A voyage to the Eaſt
" Indies ſeemed moſt likely to be of a long conti-

" nuance;

" nuance; and, perhaps, from the change of cli-
" mate, to prove fatal to me. Thither I deter-
" mined to go.

" When my intention was communicated to my
" mother, ſhe uſed every argument in her power, to
" perſuade me againſt the deſperate attempt; Anna
" joined her, but all in vain; and I threatened to go
" as a common ſailor, if ſhe would not procure me
" the proper neceſſaries. No entreaties, though all
" my friends intereſted themſelves on the occaſion,
" could induce me to remain in England."

'Have you not,' ſaid they, 'every thing that a
'man can wiſh for; an affluent fortune, affection-
'ate relations, and an happy independancy?——
'What do you deſire?—and why ſhould you tempt
'the dangers of the ſeas and viciſſitude of climates?
'why ſhould you ſubject yourſelf to the arbitrary
'command of ſome imperious captain, whoſe inſo-
'lent behaviour may occaſion you much unhappi-
'neſs? What urges you to ſeek your own deſtruc-
'tion?'

" Had I not cauſe enough? a cauſe ſufficient to
" make me abhor myſelf, the world, and every
" thing. But this fatal ſecret I carefully concealed,
" and quitted the boſom of my friend, my parent,
" and my country; in hopes either to periſh, or loſe
" the remembrance of my woes.

" Every thing proper for my departure was pre-
" pared, and I went off ſecretly to London, with-
" out ever taking leave of my family. Well I know
" the tears that have fallen from my worthy mothers
" eyes on this account: but I had not reſolution e-
" nough to face her and my ſiſter and takea laſt fare-
" well. I wrote to her, aſſigning that as the reaſon
" for my ſudden departure. The hurry of getting a
" way, and the novelty of my ſtation, amuſed my
" mind; and I began to form ſomehopes of for
" getting in time the evil that embittered the

" happineſs

" happineſs of my life. But I deceived myſelf—the
" deluſion quickly vaniſhed, when I was left to
" myſelf—I ſaw the land leſſen to my ſight with
" tranſports of joy. When it entirely vaniſhed,"—
' Thus may my guilt diſappear :' ſaid I, ' thus may
' my criminal flame be utterly extinguiſhed,'——
" but that was not ſo eaſily effected. The vulture
" of Prometheus tore my liver inceſſantly, and the
" worm that never died to me gnawed my heart.
" My imagination, heated too violently to cool
" ſoon again, repreſented the ſituation of my fami-
" ly in the moſt diſtreſſing light. Should my mother
" die, my ſiſter, my lovely helpleſs ſiſter would be
" left without a friend to guard her: her fortune,
" which would be conſiderable in caſe of my death,
" alſo would tempt the hand of violence. What
" muſt ſhe do ?—the thought was diſtraction ! it
" employed my thoughts by day, it returned to my
" dreams by night. My active fancy has carried me
" back to thoſe delightful ſpots, where, once inno-
" cent and pure, I have again beheld the charms of
" a ſiſter, and enjoyed her ſprightly and ſenſible con-
" verſe, without a crime. Dangers have preſented
" themſelves, the ready arm of a brother always
" extricated her : I ſnatched her to my arms, when
" ſome invincible power has torn me from her, and
" hurled me down precipices, whence like the rebel
" angels, I have thought myſelf ages falling. When
" I awoke, the cold ſweat has ſtood on my brow,
" agonizing horror chilled my limbs, and my guilty
" ſoul was left a prey to deſpair. The daſhing of
" the waves, the whiſtling of the winds through the
" ſhrouds, the creaking of the ſhip augmented my
" terrors, and heightened my anguiſh. Many a night
" have I ſtarted from my bed, and endured the fury
" of the tempeſt, which the boldeſt mariner has
" ſhrunk from rather than my own diſtracted thoughts
" The greater diſtance I was from England, the

" more

" more ſevere was my diſtreſs. I could turn my
" thoughts only to that ſpot where I had experi-
" enced all the pleaſure I ever knew, and where
" alas! my woes began. Careleſs of myſelf, and
" indifferent whether I ſurvived the voyage or not,
" I underwent hardſhips, and inured myſelf to la-
" bours that did not at all concern me, and which,
" by no means I had occaſion or was neceſſitated
" to do. This employment ſerved to amuſe me,
" whilſt, at the ſame time, it ſtrengthened my bo-
" dy, and accuſtomed me to bear fatigues.

" My original deſign, when I firſt went out, was
" to remain in the country: but that I could not
" do, ſo great was my anxiety to return home.
" With the firſt ſhip that ſailed for Europe I em-
" barked, and at laſt arrived at home. The kind
" reception I met from my poor mother rejoiced
" to ſee me, and the embraces of my ſiſter, only
" encreaſed the flame that deſtroyed me. Indeed
" my features were ſo mcuh altered when I return-
" ed, what from the change of climate, and what
" from the ferocity they had contracted in a con-
" ſtant war with myſelf, that they hardly knew me.
" They lamented the hardſhips I had undergone,
" which had thus metamorphoſed me; and with
" their tenderneſs and care endeavoured to allevi-
" ate my paſt ſufferings: but this was throwing
" oil on the fire.

" While I had been abſent, Sir Andrew Clem-
" ents, a Baronet of good fortune and ancient fa-
" mily, paid his addreſſes to my ſiſter. I began
" to conceive an hatred to him; and, as I had no
" reaſon, ſincerely condemned myſelf: yet I could
" not help viewing him in the light of a rival. I
" found that Anna had no great regard for him.
" He was capricious and proud; vain of his talents
" and accompliſhments, and plumed himſelf very

" much

" much on his family. He had but a narrow ſoul;
" and I did not believe he was formed to render my ſi-
" ſterhappy. However, as ſhe was a very fine woman
" he was extremely aſſiduous in paying his addreſſes
" to her. As I had arrived at age during my being
" abroad, my mother made it a point that I ſhould
" celebrate it on my return; and accordingly pre-
" parations for that purpoſe were made, and our
" friends were all invited. Among the reſt Sir An-
" drew Clements came, who, it was imagined,
" would ſoon be allied to our family, as my mother
" ſeemed to eſpouſe his cauſe. Amidſt all the gaie-
" ty and mirth that ſuch a meeting occaſioned,
" I was joyleſs; my own ſituation miſerable, un-en-
" deared with any ſocial pleaſure, preſented itſelf to
" my view with aggravated horror. " Why ſhould
" that love, which is in others the bond of ſociety,
" the chain of happineſs by which the world is link-
" ed together, be thus made a curſe and miſery to
" me?"

" Thus did I argue with myſelf, and the ſight of
" Sir Andrew's gallantries and attention to my ſiſter
" but increaſed my miſery. From that hour I con-
" ceived a mortal averſion to him: not that I was
" ſingular in the bad opinion I had formed of him,
" for thoſe who had not the ſame cauſe for hatred
" have expreſſed their diſlike of him. Some little
" ſlights, which I thought his pride occaſioned, in-
" creaſed my averſion. I could not forbid him the
" houſe: and my mother wiſhed to ſee her daughter
" poſſeſſed of the title of Lady Clements. I could not
" bear to ſee him, or remain with the family. Eve-
" ry ſcene of domeſtic happineſs or comfort was
" hateful to my eyes, who was debarred of them
" all by the perverſeneſs of my cruel deſtiny. Too
" long and too deeply had the unnatural paſſion af-
" fected me to be eaſily eradicated. I tried, but

" too

" too late, the efficacy of prayer, and the duties of
" religion. They only ſhewed my crime in heigh-
" tened colours, and I fell into melancholy and deſ-
" pair. Ever had I with the utmoſt care and vigil-
" ance ſo well guarded my expreſſions, and regulat-
" ed my actions, that no ſoul ever formed a conjec-
" ture at the cauſe of my melancholy, which was
" viſible to all the world. Accuſtomed to pore ov-
" er my griefs in private, my burdened heart was
" ready to break ; and ſome of my actions beſpoke
" a diſtempered brain.

" As I had lucid intervals, I recollected ſomething
" of what I had done in my frenzy, and determined
" to be leſs at home than ever : for theſe ſix years
" I have been eternally changing the ſcene, and
" ſeeking for diſſipation in hopes of forgetting my
" misfortunes ; and continual exerciſe has reſtored
" me a little to myſelf. Soon after I firſt formed
" this plan of wandering, Sir Andrew Clements,
" hearing of ſome expreſſions that I had made uſe
" of in the violence of my fury and the rage of my
" heart, which tended to vilify him, or make him
" ridiculous, threatened me with his vengeance.
" This came to my ears, and exaſperated me, then
" almoſt frantic. I ſought him in every place that
" there was any probability of finding him alone in:
" but it was very difficult to do this, for hearing
" it reported that I was out of my ſenſes, he always
" ſhunned me. At laſt I met him alone, and on
" foot. I addreſſed myſelf to him ; 'You have
' threatened, Sir Andrew, in a very extraordinary
' manner, whenever you ſhould meet me to break
' your vengeance on me ; this is behaviour unbe-
' coming a gentleman : as ſuch I am your equal,
' and ſhall inſiſt on your affording me the ſatisfac-
' tion you have a right to give me, and I to de-
' mand.'

'Yes, Sir,' ſaid he with a ſneer, 'when you are in 'your right ſenſes.'

'My addreſſing you in this quiet and peaceable 'manner argues me to be in them now.'

'Yes, but your comparing yourſelf to me ſhows 'the countrary.'

'Then how can you think of being allied to me 'by marrying with my ſiſter?'

'Becauſe I admiré her.'

" I then told him that he muſt drop all pretenſi-
" ons to her; which he declared he would not:
" and in the courſe of our converſation, he talked
" to me as I thought rather roughly; and not tak-
" ing warning when I deſired him to treat me more
" civilly, as we were walking together, at that
" moment we came to a bridge that was thrown
" over a little ſtream, which was however pretty
" deep; and he continuing to uſe mē ill, my rage
" was then at its height, and I took him in my arms
" and, maugre all his reſiſtance, threw him over the
" bridge. I met ſome people within a few yards of
" the ſpot, whom I ſent to his aſſiſtance. They got
" him out, as I heard afterwards, with ſome difficul-
" ty: and he was but little hurt, tho' much frighted
" From that moment his revenge againſt me has
" been implacable: and as he has been much ridi-
" culed in the country about it, for the people do
" not like him, he is determined to have me ſacri-
" ficed. He imagines me to be half mad, and there-
" in he is not miſtaken: and therefore prefers my
" being taken out of the way entirely, to the pre-
" carious ſatisfaction he would receive from a legal
" proſecution. Twice have his bravoes attempted
" me before that time when you ſo generouſly came
" to my aſſiſtance. I ſaw you ſurpriſed at my man-
" ner of treating thoſe fellows: but I had repented
" of the violence I uſed towards the man that hired

" them,

" them, and thrice have I forgiven him. If he
" ſhould again preſume upon my lenity, I will not
" ſpare him. You alſo thought me ſtrange and
" churliſh for refuſing to accept thoſe civilities
" which the father of the boy I ſaved would have
" forced upon me : but could I, the victim of an-
" guiſh and deſpair, enjoy a ſcene of felicity which
" I can never hope to partake ? The compariſon
" between my wretched ſtate and his almoſt drove
" me to frenzy. I have now opened my heart to
" you, Rigby : be my friend, and do not hate me.
" I have ſtruggled as much as man can do againſt
" this fatal, this deſtructive deſire ; and my reaſon
" and happineſs have fallen the ſacrifice to it. I
" mean to take you home with me, and introduce
" you to my mother and ſiſter. My unaccountable
" conduct, which is ſuppoſed to be the conſequence
" of a diſtracted brain, is the cauſe of great unhap-
" pineſs to them both. Be it your taſk to ſpeak
" comfort to my afflicted parent : ſooth her ſorrows,
" and give her hopes of my returning to reaſon and
" peace. In every thing, thou worthy young man,
" I will take thy advice with regard to my future
" conduct. My heart is much attached to thee ;
" and if, from the ſtrict rectitude of your notions,
" and your adherence to the laws of honour, you
" ſhall break off your connections with me, yet I
" truſt to that honour to conceal the cauſe of my
" behaviour from the world ; and if you ſhould hate
" me for my unintentional guilt, yet ſurely thy com-
" paſſionate heart will not refuſe to pity me."

He ceaſed ; and Rigby ſat motionleſs, loſt in thought, and froze with horror at the recital of the dreadful ſtory. His eyes were fixed on the ground, and his breaſt heaved with heartfelt ſighs. His imagination repreſented to him the fatal conſequence of this unnatural paſſion. He ſaw the object of its vio-

lence before him, and only beheld the ruins of a man who promiſed in the early part of his life, to be an ornament to ſociety, and a comfort to his friends. He had never heard of ſuch a thing before; for he conſidered the fictions of the poets, who deſcribed ſuch a ſcene of horror, as only calculated to inſpire a deteſtation of the crime. Aſtoniſhment therefore tied his tongue, and he remained ſilent.

Hillaſton looked at him attentively, and ſaw in his expreſſive countenance, the emotions of his ſoul. "Had you known," ſaid he, "the pain I have "ſuffered, as well in the relation of this diſmal "fact, as the bringing myſelf to a reſolution of "communicating it, you would be more inclined "to offer me your conſolation. But I muſt not ex-"pect that, or any other comfort. Alas! I am a "wretch equally deteſted by God and man, and "muſt never know what peace is, or the kindly "confidence of a friend!"

He roſe. His motion, as well as his words, wakened Rigby from the trance in which he was meditating on the ſtory he had heard.—"Deſpair," ſaid he, ſtarting up, "is equally the deſtruction of the body "and ſoul. Avoid it, my friend, for ſuch you are; "and ſhall be ever to me," added he embracing him. "The band of affliction ſhall but unite our "ſouls the cloſer: and never ſhall you have cauſe "to repent your confidence in me. Though I have "as yet been a ſtranger to adverſity, I know not "what woes may be in reſerve for me.—Yes, Hil-"laſton, my hand and my heart are devoted to "you; henceforward we ſhall be more uſeful to "each other.—From my ſoul I pity, I commiſerate "you, and doubt not but time may make a happy "change in you ſentiments and your affections. "One great ſtroke in your favour is, your having "eaſed your heart of its burden, by communicating

"the

" the cauſe of your diſtreſſes to a friend; it is half
" a cure. Be of good comfort: this dreadful cloud,
" that has with black and diſmal aſpect, thrown
" this horrid gloom over the former part of your
" days, may yet be diſpelled, and the bright ray
" of peace and tranquillity, once more ſhine on
" your diſtracted ſoul. I will uſe every endeavour
" in my power to reſtore you to happineſs and
" joy."

Hillaſton looked at him for a little time after he had ceaſed.—" I am not deceived in you," ſaid he, his heart overwhelmed with tender ſenſations.——" You are the generous, the kind, the compaſſion-" ate man I took you for. I may yet be happy," added he, the big tear trickling down his cheek, " and you may be the cauſe of it.——Forgive me, " Rigby, I am not eaſily moved thus."

He ſnatched him to his ſwelling breaſt, and promiſing to return ſoon again, departed, to compoſe himſelf.

BOOK VII.

WHEN Hillaſton went away, Rigby threw himſelf into his chair, to reflect on what had paſſed. Many and various were the thoughts that racked his brain. He pitied his friend from his heart. Dreadful and horrible as the paſſion he confeſſed was, yet every thing that he could do was tried to expel it from his breaſt. Nor did he indulge the deteſtable, the unatural flame. The conflict he endured was viſible to every body, though none but he knew the cauſe. But, when he conſidered that a ſiſter was the object of his guilty deſires, his blood

ran cold, and horror ſeized his heart. He had not as yet known the power of that paſſion, which either conſtitutes the happineſs or miſery of a man's life; and could but badly judge of its force, though he had ſuch a melancholy example of its effects. He, at all events, determined to uſe his utmoſt efforts to baniſh this paſſion from his friend's breaſt; and, though there was little likelihood of it then, he did not deſpair of being able to accompliſh it in time. But he concluded that would depend on accident more than any thing elſe; and if it were poſſible ſome other woman could be found, amiable enough to engage his affections, thought that would be the moſt efficacious means of effecting his cure. He formed a notion of what he muſt ſuffer by the pain he felt himſelf, and the dreadful agitations the fearful ſtory had occaſioned in his own boſom when he related. "Thank God," ſaid he, "that I have no "ſiſter, or, perhaps, I might be as truly wretched as "my friend. My uncontroulable paſſions might ſeek "the ſame object that his have done, and I be ren-"deredanother monſter, for the pity and deteſtation "of the aſtoniſhed world. Once more let my thanks "aſcend to Heaven, that has removed this acci-"dental cauſe of ſin from me; for I am as weak "and liable to fall as others."

Till Hillaſton rerurned to him again, which happened in the courſe of a week, he employed himſelf almoſt wholly in thinking of him. He received him with great affection: and the unhappy Hillaſton ſeemed more eaſy than he had been ſince he firſt became acquainted with his young friend. "I return "to you now, my dear Rigby, with an heart more "light than it has been for many years. Your kind "conſolation is a balm to my afflicted ſoul, and your "participation of my woes has eaſed me of half the "load; I find ſo great a change in myſelf, that my

"deſpondence

" deſpondence begins to give way, and I conceived
" hopes that I may yet be happy enough to meet
" peace and tranquility."

" Fear it not," replied Rigby; " that hope will
" go a great way to effect a cure. Yet you muſt be
" weaned from this unhappy affection by gentle
" means. The mind, when wounded, muſt be cu-
" red like the wounds of the body; a remedy that
" operates and heals too haſtily, never has a proper
" effect; the malady confined in one place breaks
" out in another. Strong though your paſſions are,
" and, long as you have laboured under this afflict-
" ion, yet your reaſon is not impaired; your ſenſes
" are in their full perfection, and you have a ſound
" judgment. There is a great analogy alſo in the
" effects that diſorders of the mind and the body
" have on us. In proportion to the ſtrength of our
" nerves, or our corporal powers, a fever ſhall rack
" us more violently than if we were weak and ener-
" vated. Our ſpirits too, as experience teaches us,
" have a wondrous effect upon our bodies. You are
" a remarkable inſtance of the truth of theſe max-
" ims, and the violence of this dreadful paſſion has
" kept you in eternal torment; and none more poig-
" nant than your ſelf-condemnation. Open your
" heart to me, Hillaſton; let us probe this wound
" to the bottom, before we pretend to heal it."

" Have I not opened it entirely to you? have I
" not diſplayed my crime and my ſufferings?"

" You have: and every ſymptom that may indi-
" cate a relapſe you muſt alſo communicate, for I
" will be your mind's phyſician."

Hillaſton found great relief from his friend's con-verſation; and in about a week after, propoſed to him, to go along with him to ſee his mother. He conſented, and they ſet off as uſual on foot, as the houſe was not twenty miles from the univerſity.

" You

" You will now," ſaid Hillaſton, " ſee my mo-
" ther and the ſiſter who has occaſioned, innocently
" occaſioned, all my misfortunes: however I may
" act, take no notice of my behaviour; but ſtay
" there with them two or three days. I promiſe you,
" they will treat you with great care and attention.
" I may not remain there three hours, and I may
" ſtay the whole day; bur I ſhall not ſleep there;
" for that reaſon, we will ſtop at an inn within three
" miles of the houſe, and go there in the morning
" before breakfaſt."

" Is it not poſſible," demanded Rigby, for you to
" ſtay there with me? for I ſhall cut an awkward
" figure by myſelf: beſides, if you could only uſe
" yourſelf to her company and converſation for a
" ſhort time, you would be more thoroughly ſenſible
" of your ſituation: your reaſon would come more
" effectually to your aid, and point out the impoſſi-
" bility of ever gratifying the paſſion you have ſo
" unhappily conceived, and ſo fatally nouriſhed, for
" ſo long a time."

" Ah! Rigby," ſaid he, " I cannot do it: I
" have endeavoured to accuſtom myſelf to hear
" her, to ſee her, to reflect that ſhe is my ſiſ-
" ter, and that I am moſt unnatural and mon-
" ſtrous. The conſequence has been that my
" frenzy has returned on me with more fury than
" before, and driven me to the greateſt extremities.
" I have lain whole nights in the fields without any
" covering but the heavens, or any pillow but the
" earth: yet I have never ſuffered any inconvenience
" from theſe hardſhips; on the contrary, I have
" grown more robuſt and able to endure them. But
" now I am determined to act more diſcreetly, and
" convince thoſe who imagine me to be deprived of
" my reaſon, that I am yet, thank God, in the per-
" fect enjoyment of my ſenſes, and as capable of per-
" forming my duties in life as any body."

Rigby

Rigby commended this reſolution in him, condemning his indulging his paſſions, which only ſerved to increaſe his woe.

"I will do every thing I can," replied he; but "the evil is too deeply rooted in my heart, to be eaſily diſplaced. If I ſhould not be able to maintain "my ground and ſtay there, yet I am convinced you "will be treated with peculiar reſpect; for my mother will imagine me to be recovered by going "again into ſociety: and you are the only perſon "whom for a long time I have conſorted with: I "would have you reinſpire my worthy and beloved "parent with hopes, and you will ſtill render yourſelf more agreeable to her."

Hillaſton conducted Rigby to the inn where he was to ſleep that night, and as he was well known thereabouts, was treated with great care and tenderneſs by the people, who were equally pleaſed and ſurprized to ſee him with a companion: they were alſo more aſtoniſhed at ſeeing him demean himſelf in a more ſociable manner than he had done for many years. In the morning they repaired to his houſe, and having arrived there pretty early, Hillaſton ſent up word to his mother and ſiſter, who were not yet riſen, that he and a friend were come to breakfaſt, and ſpend the day with them.

"While they are preparing themſelves, Rigby," "ſaid he, "we will go and take a walk in the gar-"den."

He conſented, and had an opportunity of viewing the houſe by that means. It was built in the modern taſte: was elegant and commodious, ſeated on an eminence, which commanded a pleaſing though not an extenſive proſpect. The gardens were laid out in a pretty taſte: but there ſeemed to be an air of wildneſs and negligence in the whole that required a maſter's eye and care to remedy and remove.

"This

"This is a ſweet place," ſaid Rigby.

"Yes, it is capable of many improvements, and "might be rendered very agreeable; but ſome fu- "ture poſſeſſor muſt make it ſo, for I cannot."

They ſtrolled about, and in a very ſhort time a ſervant acquainted Mr. Hillaſton, and his friend, that the ladies waited for them. They followed him into the parlour where breakfaſt was prepared, and Rigby was introduced to Mrs. and Miſs Hillaſton. The former, though a little advanced in years, had yet the remains of beauty, and preſerved a great deal of dignity in her manner and deportment; but there was ſorrow viſibly expreſſed in her countenance that ſeemed to prey on her ſpirits. The latter was about five and twenty, extremely genteel in her perſon, and her face was very handſome, but ſhe appeared to partake of her mother's grief, for melancholy dimmed her bright eyes; her hair was languid, her aſpect dejected. Hillaſton ſaluted both his mother and ſiſter, and made the kindeſt enquiries concerning their healths; which they returned in the moſt affectionate and tender manner. He recommended his friend to them, who intended, he told them, to ſtay two or three days to bear them company. The converſation became a little more general between them, whilſt Hillaſton ſat buried in thought, and maintained a profound ſilence. Rigby found Mrs. Hillaſton and her daughter to poſſeſs a great deal of polite knowledge and ſound judgement.

Hillaſton interrupted the converſation, by aſking his friend, if he would take a walk about the grounds; which he agreed to; and they left the ladies to dreſs themſelves againſt dinner.

When they had got a convenient diſtance from the houſe, Hillaſton ſtopped ſhort, and looking very ſtedfaſtly at his friend, aſked him his opinion of his ſiſter.

"I think

" I think her a very amiable girl indeed; but ſhe " is your ſiſter."

" I know it, I know it too well," ſaid he with a groan; " and there is an inſuperable bar put to all " my hopes. Deteſted wretch that I am, to form " ſuch—! more horrible to utter them! The day " ſhould be obſcured, the ſun ceaſe to ſhine on ſuch " a monſter! But every thing is dark and abomina- " ble to me. You would like her, Rigby, if you " knew the virtues of her ſoul ſo well as I do."

" She has many perfections, no doubt; but are " there not others who have as many? Look on " ſome women who even poſſeſſes them in an infe- " rior degree; there are many who are truly amia- " ble; and your choice of whom neither religion, " nature, nor reaſon, can oppoſe. Unite yourſelf " to ſuch a one. Your domeſtic concerns, your " children, the tender and indiſpenſible duties an- " nexed to a father and an huſband, will divert your " attention, and in time you will forget this unhap- " py deluſion. The force of the torrent that cannot " be ſtopped or dammed up, is always weakened by " dividing the ſtream into many channels. Let your " affections be turned upon ſome other object though " leſs worthy; and though there may not at firſt " be much paſſion, yet when you find yourſelf eaſed " of the load that oppreſſes you, you will love the " woman who has been the means of reſcuing you " from ſo much miſery."

" Ah, Rigby, to what do you adviſe me? Yet " your intention is good, and your counſel is whole- " ſome. Whom can I addreſs? or can I think that " —? But I muſt not think; for madneſs will follow " Your experiment ſhall be tried: I will endea- " vour."

Rigby tried every argument in his power to perſuade him; and he found leſs difficulty in prevailing

on

"This is a ſweet place," ſaid Rigby.

"Yes, it is capable of many improvements, and "might be rendered very agreeable; but ſome fu- "ture poſſeſſor muſt make it ſo, for I cannot."

They ſtrolled about, and in a very ſhort time a ſervant acquainted Mr. Hillaſton, and his friend, that the ladies waited for them. They followed him into the parlour where breakfaſt was prepared, and Rigby was introduced to Mrs. and Miſs Hillaſton. The former, though a little advanced in years, had yet the remains of beauty, and preſerved a great deal of dignity in her manner and deportment; but there was ſorrow viſibly expreſſed in her countenance that ſeemed to prey on her ſpirits. The latter was about five and twenty, extremely genteel in her perſon, and her face was very handſome, but ſhe appeared to partake of her mother's grief, for melancholy dimmed her bright eyes; her hair was languid, her aſpect dejected. Hillaſton ſaluted both his mother and ſiſter, and made the kindeſt enquiries concerning their healths; which they returned in the moſt affectionate and tender manner. He recommended his friend to them, who intended, he told them, to ſtay two or three days to bear them company. The converſation became a little more general between them, whilſt Hillaſton ſat buried in thought, and maintained a profound ſilence. Rigby found Mrs. Hillaſton and her daughter to poſſeſs a great deal of polite knowledge and ſound judgement.

Hillaſton interrupted the converſation, by aſking his friend, if he would take a walk about the grounds; which he agreed to; and they left the ladies to dreſs themſelves againſt dinner.

When they had got a convenient diſtance from the houſe, Hillaſton ſtopped ſhort, and looking very ſtedfaſtly at his friend, aſked him his opinion of his ſiſter.

"I think

" I think her a very amiable girl indeed; but ſhe " is your ſiſter."

" I know it, I know it too well," ſaid he with a groan; " and there is an inſuperable bar put to all " my hopes. Deteſted wretch that I am, to form " ſuch—! more horrible to utter them! The day " ſhould be obſcured, the ſun ceaſe to ſhine on ſuch " a monſter! But every thing is dark and abomina- " ble to me. You would like her, Rigby, if you " knew the virtues of her ſoul ſo well as I do."

" She has many perfections, no doubt; but are " there not others who have as many? Look on " ſome women who even poſſeſſes them in an infe- " rior degree; there are many who are truly amia- " ble; and your choice of whom neither religion, " nature, nor reaſon, can oppoſe. Unite yourſelf " to ſuch a one. Your domeſtic concerns, your " children, the tender and indiſpenſible duties an- " nexed to a father and an huſband, will divert your " attention, and in time you will forget this unhap- " py deluſion. The force of the torrent that cannot " be ſtopped or dammed up, is always weakened by " dividing the ſtream into many channels. Let your " affections be turned upon ſome other object though " leſs worthy; and though there may not at firſt " be much paſſion, yet when you find yourſelf eaſed " of the load that oppreſſes you, you will love the " woman who has been the means of reſcuing you " from ſo much miſery."

" Ah, Rigby, to what do you adviſe me? Yet " your intention is good, and your counſel is whole- " ſome. Whom can I addreſs? or can I think that " —? But I muſt not think; for madneſs will follow " Your experiment ſhall be tried: I will endea- " vour."

Rigby tried every argument in his power to per- ſuade him; and he found leſs difficulty in prevailing

on

on him to attempt it, than he thought for: He changed the ſubject inſenſibly; and they chatted about the different parts of the country, in a very agreeable manner, till the hour of dinner approached.

When they returned, they found their repaſt ready; which beſpoke the taſte and hoſpitality of their fair entertainers. During and after dinner Hillaſton ſeemed to throw off his reſerve, and behaved more ſociably than he had done of a long time. The effect this change in him had upon his mother and ſiſter was very evident in their countenances; and their ſpirits ſeemed to revive, in proportion as his ſenſe and reaſon returned. The affectionate mother thanked Rigby with her eyes, to whom ſhe attributed this alteration in her ſon. Miſs Hillaſton treated him in the moſt courteous manner; and though her brother had frequent returns of his habitual gloom, they did not laſt long: for he was pleaſed to ſee his friend ſo well received, and his mind had a tranſient ſuſpenſion of woe. The evening was ſpent in the moſt happy intercourſe; and Miſs Hillaſton indulged her gueſt with ſeveral airs on the harpſichord, which ſhe was a great miſtreſs of, and accompanied with her voice. He could not help obſerving that ſhe always choſe the moſt plantive and tender ſongs, which ſuited her voice, it being weak, but ſweet and harmonious. There was ſomething moſt expreſſive and penetrating in her manner, and her brother was tranſported at the ſounds. In due time they retired to reſt; and Rigby found every thing very genteel and good in the houſe, and enjoyed a ſweet repoſe.

When he aroſe in the morning he learn'd that his friend had gone away before day; this did not much ſurprize him: he thought that there was a good ſtep toward his recovery already taken by his ſleeping there that night. He met the ladies at the breakfaſt

breakfaſt table. After the common ſalutations of the morning, Mrs. Hillaſton told him ſhe was very ſorry her ſon was gone away, but hoped that would be no reaſon for his making his viſit ſhorter than he at firſt intended. Rigby aſſured them he would not. "—We will endeavour to entertain you, Sir, as agreeably as we can," ſaid Miſs Hillaſton, "in my "brother's abſence."—Rigby bowed.

"Ah, Sir," ſaid the old lady, "you can be no "ſtranger to my ſon's diſtraction that makes him act "in this manner. But for that, I ſhould be the "happieſt woman—but to ſee my child in this me- "lancholy condition, deſtroys all thoughts of en- "joyment of any pleaſure, and comfort is a ſtran- "ger to me."

She was obliged to wipe away the ſtarting tear—her daughter's eyes were ſuffuſed, nor was Rigby unaffected — Silence enſued.

"It is very ſhocking, indeed, Madam," ſaid he after a long pauſe, "but it is to be hoped that this "may not continue; of late I have obſerved him "more ſociable, and leſs flighty, and in time he may "return to his reaſon, and be, once more, a pleaſure "and happineſs to his family."

"Oh Sir, my prayers are eternally aſcending to "heaven to work that great change—and ſince I "ſee that he has attached himſelf to your ſociety, I "have conceived more hopes of it than ever.—In- "deed his behaviour laſt night was more mild and "reaſonable than I have ſeen a long time. Had "you but known him before this melancholy ſeized "him, you would have liked him.—He was amiable "in his perſon—gentle in his manners—He was be- "loved by every body—a dutiful ſon—an affection- "ate brother".

"Yes," interrupted Miſs Hillaſton, when he was "ill and delirious, my name was never out of his "mouth."

"Ah,

" Ah, ſince that fever," reſumed Mrs. Hillaſton, " he has not been in his right reaſon—He would go, " in ſpite of all our intreaties, to the Eaſt Indies: " and he came home ſo altered and changed from " what he had been, there was no knowing him.— " He ſhunned all company: but, ſince he has been " in Berkſhire, as he informed me he ſpent a great " part of laſt ſummer there with you, Sir, I begin " to form ſome hopes of his return to reaſon—And, " what is very aſtoniſhing, there can be no cauſe " aſſigned for this alteration in him."

" Then it is more to be expected that he may yet " recover himſelf, Madam: he certainly has ex- " preſſed a great regard for me, and I ſhall do eve- " ry thing in my power to procure him any pleaſure, " or to divert him from his preſent flightineſs; but I " really think he is better than when I firſt knew " him."

The ladies joined him in opinion, by declaring he was ſo; and Rigby's confidence in his approaching recovery, gave them great ſpirits, and made him a very agreeable companion to them, as they could freely talk of his misfortunes to his friend. He paſſed this day with them more pleaſantly than the former, as they were all better acquainted, and their reſerve worn off.—The next day he begg'd leave to depart, which was permitted, on his promiſing to come and ſee them ſoon again. The old lady, with whom he was a great favourite, for taking ſuch a part in her ſon's concerns. inſiſted on his coming; and declared, they would eſteem his quick return as a proof of his friendſhip and liking for the family. Rigby aſſured them of his regard and good wiſhes for their happineſs, and thanking them for their extraordinary civilities to him, marched homeward. He expected that Hillaſton would have met him on the road, but he was diſappointed, nor did he ſee him for a week afterwards.

afterwards. When he came it gave him much pleaſure, to hear his friend praiſe his mother and ſiſter, and to find that he had given them ſome hopes of his recovering his reaſon. He embraced him with great fervency, and thanked him for his kindneſs. Rigby congratulated him on his reſolution, and propoſed going over ſoon again—It was agreed to on his part, and they fix'd their journey for the latter end of April, then about three weeks diſtant, intending to ſpend ſeven or eight days there; and Hillaſton agreed, if he could not find himſelf able to remain the whole time, that he would come as often as poſſible during his ſtay there. Rigby ſaw him again before the day they had appointed to ſet off on; and as he found him ſtill more eaſy and compoſed, began to form the moſt ſanguine expectations of recovering him from that fatal gulf in which he had ſo long been plunged.

The day at length came. and they ſet off together —It was ſpring, and the moſt delightful part of that ſeaſon.—Every object communicated pleaſure and inſpired joy. Rigby, naturally chearful, felt the powerful influence of the returning year, and was all ſpirits; his converſation had an effect upon Hillaſton's gloom, who was much exhilarated by his friend's pleaſantry. They propoſed to be time enough for dinner at Mrs. Hillaſton's, who had been appriſed of their coming by her ſon.

With great ſatisfaction and pleaſure ſhe ſaw them arrive; for ſhe conceived that her ſon's fondneſs for Rigby's company would effect a happy change in his diſpoſition. The jocund Rigby, full of pleaſure in the hopes of doing his friend and his family very eſſential ſervice, in redeeming him from the bondage of that deteſted paſſion, was in a ſituation moſt ſuſceptible of the tendereſt impreſſions; and he found in the face and perſon of Maria Leeſon the firſt cauſe

of

of them in his breaſt. She was a viſitor at Mrs. Hillaſton's: and poor Rigby never ſaw any thing female before, that he liked half ſo well · She was about eighteen: but her youth, from the good examples and precepts of her parents, had been furniſhed with ſuch inſtruction, that ſhe was a woman in every point of uſeful and polite knowledge: her mind, where the virtues grew ſpontaneouſly, had received the greateſt improvement; and never was a pure ſoul incloſed in a more elegant body. Her form was faultleſs; her ſhape was perfect ſymmetry; nor was the beauty of her face inferior to her corporal elegance. Lively and wild, her ſparkling eyes captivated the beholders. Her chearfulneſs, the conſequence of innocence, gave a luſtre to her chams, as the rays of the ſun add beauty to a proſpect, by gilding the ſcene, and heightening the colours.

Hillaſton introduced Rigby to the charming girl, and he then firſt felt himſelf uneaſy from an unknown cauſe; his ſprightlineſs, in a manner, forſook him; and his friend ſeemed to have picked it up, for never had Hillaſton been ſo amuſing before. After dinner they diſengaged themſelves from the ladies; and Rigby was very anxious to learn who Miſs Leeſon was, that had affected him ſo ſtrongly, and at firſt ſight too. He learned that ſhe was the eldeſt daughter of Mr. Leeſon, who lived in the next county; a gentleman of good eſtate, who had two more daughters and a ſon—that they were much reſpected and eſteemed, and that there was a ſtrict friendſhip between his ſiſter and Maria.—"Indeed," added Hil-
"laſton, "ſhe is a moſt worthy good girl, I have a
"great eſteem for her, and you will like her much
"when you come to know her better."

"That may be," ſaid Rigby; "but I think ſhe
"is much to be admired from the firſt view."

"Ho, ho, you're caught then."

"I doh't

" I don't know as to that, but ſhe is a very lovely
" girl."

" If you think ſo now, ſhe'll be divine before the
" week's out."

They return'd to tea, and found the ladies waiting for them. Mrs. and Miſs Hillaſton paid the greateſt attention to Rigby, whom they looked upon as their beſt friend, and by whoſe means they ſhould once more ſeen happineſs, in the reſtoration of Mr. Hillaſton; but Miſs Leeſon was the only object that he had eyes or ears for. Her gaiety inſpired the whole company, and Rigby began to aſſume his chearfulneſs. But he drank large draughts of love: and ſo delighful and bewitching were his ſenſations, that he abandoned himſelf to his paſſion without even ſtruggling. The evening was paſſed in the greateſt harmony, but the next morning Hillaſton went away—Rigby endeavoured to comfort his mother, by aſſuring her he had promiſed to return again before the week was out, perhaps in a day or two. In the abſence of his friend he rambled about with the two girls, who were extremely well pleaſed with their companion—He was all life and ſpirits: Maria was the ſame: and their united endeavours to divert, diſſipated Miſs Hillaſton's chagrin, and ſhe became merry. Rigby never was ſo happy before.—The little innocent freedoms which he was allowed to take with his fair companions, increaſed his flame for Maria; and when in their walks ſhe lean'd on one arm, and Miſs Hillaſton on the other, his heart palpitated with great velocity.

In the evenings their chief amuſement was muſic, in which the two ladies excelled; and their different ſtile and manner delighted Rigby. It has been before obſerved that Miſs Hillaſton choſe the moſt plaintive and moving airs. When ſhe played and ſang, our lover, yet in his noviciate, felt the force

of

of the pleaſing ſounds. They penetrated to his heart. He ſuffered the pangs of ſlighted love, and his hopes decayed as the enchanting tones died away in his ears. But this melancholy and tender languor was baniſhed, when the charming Maria's fingers touched the trembling ſtrings. Miſs Hillaſton ſang the torments of hopeleſs paſſion: Maria chaunted the triumphs of beauty.

" Sounds, tho' charming, can't relieve thee,
" Do not, ſhepherd, then deceive thee,
" Muſic is the voice of love."

Rigby's agitated ſoul confeſſed the truth of it. His animated eyes ſpoke his ſenſations, and every pulſe beat time, with ſympathetic vibrations, to the magic ſounds. All was tumultuous joy, was agonizing rapture. There was ſomething in her voice, which was clear, ſweet, and ſtrong, that penetrated his ſoul. Yet he could not ſit ſtill while ſhe ſang or played; his ſpirits were ſet in motion by the harmony; they affected his nerves, and ſhame only prevented his expreſſing their force by capering about.

The pleaſure he experienced from her ſkill in playing made her ſtill more lovely in his eyes, and more dear to his heart. A union with ſo much perfection would be true happineſs. He found that he loved her, that he was uneaſy when he was out of her ſight, and could think of nothing elſe.

Rigby, though not bred in courts, had an eaſy and natural politeneſs, which made him an agreeable and deſirable companion. He was more eſpecially calculated for the ſervice of the fair ſex, with whom a good temper, and a cheerful behaviour, are very often the greateſt recommendations. The ladies, who were pleaſed with his good humour, treated him with more familiarity than they would

would have done one who was proud and reſerved in his manner, or moroſe in his diſpoſition. This condeſcenſion was fatal to poor Rigby, who, by that means, had an opportunity of contemplating Maria's perſonal charms and mental virtues more nearly. He found that, as Hillaſton had foretold, he eſteemed her almoſt divine. He loved, and with an ardor that he could not, did not wiſh to controul. But to remain without telling the fair object of his affections what he felt, would be ridiculous and abſurd; he therefore determined to inform her of the paſſion he had conceived for her: but how to do it he knew not; for he dreaded being expoſed to her wit and merriment, upon the declaration of his love, ſhould he do it in a ſerious manner, and with a doleful face. He truſted to chance for the opportunity, and reſolve to ſeize the firſt that ſhould preſent itſelf.

His particularity and attention to Maria had not eſcaped the girl's notice, and Miſs Hillaſton could not avoid congratulating her friend on the conqueſt ſhe had made.

"Why ſhou'd you think ſo?"

"I have many reaſons; and it is my opinion, "Maria, he will ſoon tell you ſo himſelf. His eyes "have made the ſecret known already, even to you, "or I am very much miſtaken. His attention to "you is very remarkable; and I'll be hang'd if he "does not wiſh you to notice it.—But what do "you think of him?"

"Why, the man's well enough."

"Come, come, Maria, I know you think better "of him than that. My brother is very laviſh in "his praiſe; and indeed he ſeems to be a very wor- "thy young gentleman. I am ſure we are under "very great obligations to him, for the care he "takes of my brother, who has made him his only

"companion;

" companion; and, ſince he has been acquainted " with him, has been leſs flighty than I have " ſeen him theſe ſeven years."

" That may be a very good reaſon why you " ſhould like him, Anna, but none why I ſhould.— " And pray, am I to be fond of every one who " chances to take a liking to my pretty face? If " that were to be the caſe, upon my word I ſhould " have enough to do."

" No, no, Maria; if you can take a fancy to " one, it will be full enough."

" Let me ſee him then."

" I believe you have ſeen him already, and Mr. " Rigby is the man."

" Then you know more than I do——But let us " change the ſubject."

Thus did the happy, the innocent females, impart their ſentiments to each other: but, though Hillaſton came three times during the week that Rigby had been there, yet could not the latter communicate to his unhappy friend the feelings of his heart, or the violence of his paſſion, leſt he ſhould rekindle the embers of the fatal flame which he conceived and hoped were dying in his boſom. However, Hillaſton, though an unnatural deluſion had obſcured his reaſon on one ſide, had great ſagacity, and quickly perceived what paſſed in his friend's breaſt. He let him know that he was acquainted with it; and that any one with the leaſt penetration, could not longer remain ignorant of it. Rigby bluſhed as he confeſſed the truth of his friend's obſervation; but defended himſelf by ſaying, that even he confeſſed her worthy of any perſon's affection.

" I did ſo," replied Hillaſton, " and ſtill I ſay ſo. " You may be happy as you can wiſh: there is " every probabillity, if her heart is not engaged, " that you may win it. There are no reaſons, if

" her

" her parents can be induced, as I doubt not but
" they may, to conſent to your union, why your
" love may not be ſanctified by connubial vows.
" You may yet be bleſſed, Rigby ; and that you
" may, is my ſincereſt wiſh, and ſhall be my con-
" ſtant prayer. But I fear I am doomed to miſery,
" as well in this world as the next. Though deſ-
" pondent as I am, I hope that I have experienced
" woes ſufficient in this ſtate to purge away all my
" guilt ; and that my future torments will be re-
" mitted, wretch that I am."

Rigby interpoſed, and endeavoured to recal his thoughts from this deſtructive channel. He ſtrove to ſoothe and heal his ſorrows in vain ; the remembrance of what he then and had long ſuffered, came freſh upon him. The flood that had been nearly dammed up, broke over its bounds, and deluged his heart : he ſtretched out his hand to his friend.

" Ah, Rigby !" ſaid he, as he ſhook him by the hand, " this conteſt is too powerful for your friend :
" it will end in his deſtruction at laſt. I find myſelf
" leſs able to maintain the conflict, when every
" reaſonable argument, both human and divine,
" riſe to oppoſe me. How long ſhall you ſtay
" here ?"

" Two or three days more."

" In a week I will ſee you at Cambridge again :
" Fare you well till then : I can ſtay here no
" longer."

Every tender and humane ſentiment in Rigby's boſom was intereſted in his friend's behalf: He regarded, he pitied him.

" It is true," ſaid he, " that perhaps I may ſuc-
" ceed in my love , and if I do, ſhall be truly hap-
" py. There are none of thoſe dreary clouds be-
" fore me that obſtruct his view, and deſtroy his
" peace. And even ſhould I meet her ſcorn, or

" find

" find it impoſſible to gain her affection ; yet I ſhall " not ſuffer the aggregated misfortune of entertain- " ing a criminal paſſion for a ſiſter."

Mrs. Hillaſton, who had not ſeen her ſon ſo often in ſuch a ſhort ſpace of time as during Rigby's reſidence at her houſe, courted his company, and intreated him to ſtay as long as ſuited his convenience ; in hopes of drawing the wretched wanderer home again, and by that means reſtoring him to himſelf.

When ſhe ſpoke to him on this head, he informed her of his appointment to meet him at Cambridge within a week. As ſhe thought it would be wrong to prevent their meeting, hoping ſuch good effects from aſſociating together, ſhe conſented to his going within that time ; only demanding a promiſe to return ſoon again, in hopes of having the pleaſure of ſeeing her beloved ſon the oftener, through his means.

All that remained for him now was, to ſeek the opportunity of telling the adorable Maria his fondneſs for her, which he ſuffered to be the ruling paſſion of his heart. Already had two days elapſed, and he had not been able to effect his deſign. On the third, as he was walking in the garden with the two girls, Mrs. Hillaſton ſent a ſervant to acquaint her daughter that ſhe wanted her. Maria remained with Rigby. Now the moment that he had long expected was come ; and, *Spare to ſpeak, and ſpare to ſpeed*, was ſo ſelf-evident a truth, that he determined, at all events, to tell his paſſion to hi charming miſtreſs. He revolved many beginnings in his mind ; none would do. But what his reaſon and reflection could not have furniſhed him with, a couple of cock-ſparrows afforded him, who, engaged in eager combat, alighted almoſt at the feet of the young couple, to finiſh their engagement. The hen,

who

who was the cauſe and reward of the battle, ſtood by; and when one of the heroes was worſted, flew off with the conqueror. The other, after recovering himſelf, flew away likewiſe. Rigby and the fair Maria were ſilent witneſſeſs of this ſcene.

"Go your ways, you are a happy fellow," ſaid he, with a ſigh.

"You cannot mean the bird who flew away "laſt."

"I do indeed, Madam."

"That is ſomething extraordinary; for he has "been beaten, and has loſt his miſtreſs into the "bargain: And do you think him happy?"

"Certainly, Madam; for he has not reflection "to ſhew him the greatneſs of his loſs. It is only "for man to love ſincerely; and, ſlighted, to be "wretched. His judgment compares the difference "of his ſituation, and places the contraſt of being "bleſſed with the object of his affection, or diſre-"garded by her, in the ſtrongeſt colours. Memo-"ry retains the images, and all his boaſted ſuperio-"tity in rational powers over the brute creation, "only conſpires to increaſe his miſery."

"This is a very melancholy picture you have "drawn, Sir, of a man in love."

"It is a very faithful one, Madam; and what, "I fear, may be my lot. It is the picture of a man "poſſeſſed of an hopeleſs paſſion, which he nou-"riſhes in his breaſt to his own deſtruction."

"Upon my word, Mr. Rigby, I ſhould be ſorry "any acquaintance of mine ſhould labour under "ſuch complicated woes. But I cannot imagine, "from the chearfulneſs of your diſpoſition, that you "are in ſuch a deſperate ſtate. I thought lovers "were always ſad, and melancholy, and fretful, "and peeviſh; on the contrary, you are all good "humour and ſpirit. I cannot credit your aſſerti-"ons at all,

"And

" And therein conſiſts my unhappineſs."

" How ſo, in the name of wonder !"

" Becauſe lovely Maria, when I tell you, as I " now do, in the ſincerity of my ſoul, that I am a " victim to your charms, and that my heart feels " the tendereſt paſſion for you that ever virtue and " honour inſpired, you have have already prejudic- " ed me ; and the unfortunate chearfulneſs of my " diſpoſition is aſſigned as the cauſe why you will " not believe my declarations,. On my word, Miſs "Leeſon, I ſhall have ſufficient cauſe to be leſs mer- " ry for the future."

" And upon my word, Mr. Rigby," ſaid ſhe, " laughing, " I do not ſee any reaſon why you " ſhould not be as merry as ever. Come ; you muſt " not ſuppoſe that I have lived ſo long without ha- " ving many admirers ; and if I have deprived them " of all their gaiety, had they been as agreeable as " you I ſhould have been a public nuſance."

" Perhaps they have been more favoured."

" Oh, not a bit, I aſſure you. For I look upon " the moſt part of theſe adreſſes to be a cuſtomary " gallantry, which every polite man ſhews to a wo- " man whoſe face pleaſes him, and which ought by " no means to be conſidered in a ſerious light."

" Ah, Madam, at that rate you make no difference " between the profeſſions of your admirers ; for I " ſure you muſt have many. And, though you treat " them all alike yet there is not much juſtice in " your proceeding : for ſurely ſome muſt deſerve " better than others."

" I muſt have that proved to me."

" Give me leave to enter the liſts then, lovely " Maria ; and if the prize is to be your favour, I " make no doubt of being victor."

" I caunot prevent you, Sir," ſaid ſhe with an engaging ſmile ; " and am ſure your merit will in- " title you to a more noble reward."

" I wiſh

"I wiſh you may think ſo: but I can have "none I covet ſo much, or would endure more to "gain, than your heart. My ſincerity and con-"ſtancy will convince you of the truth of my paſ-"ſion."

Miſs Hillaſton's appearing in ſight, interrupted the converſation, which now took a general turn; and ſoon after they went in doors.

Happy as Rigby was in having communicated the ſecret of his heart to Maria, and though he had met nothing forbidding in her manner which deprived him of hope; yet he had loſt his gaiety, and could not for the ſoul of him, recal his ſpirits. The ladies obſerved, and ralied him on it: and Maria took an opportunity of telling him in private, with a ſignificant ſmile, that if he had loſt his heart, ſhe hoped he had not loſt his chearfulneſs too.

This encouragement reſtored him a little to himſelf, and he again reſumed his good humour. The next day, juſt after they had done breakfaſt, a ſervant brought a letter to Miſs Leeſon. With permiſſion ſhe opened it, and the contents informed her that her mother was exceedingly ill, and, as it was apprehended, in ſome danger; therefore ſhe was deſired to return immediately. Maria was dreadfully alarmed at this intelligence, and giving way to natural affection, burſt into tears. Rigby, who watched every motion of her countenance, ſaw with the greateſt concern, her grief and affliction. Except the mere ſhedding of tears, a ſtranger would have imagined that he had received the melancholy news; ſo much was he ſhocked at his Maria's trouble. When it was proper to ſpeak to her, he addreſſed her in the moſt ſoothing language, and offered every proper condolence in his power. She was pleaſed and affected with his tenderneſs, but declined his offer of accompanying her any part of the way home, and ſet out with the ſervant, who

was ſent with a poſt-chaiſe for her, in leſs than half an hour after ſhe had received the account of her mother's illneſs.

Rigby, who admired her in the midſt of her gaiety, adored her in the hour of diſtreſs. He thought her tears heightened her beauty, his compaſſionate heart felt for her ſituation, and his concern for her grief but ſhewed the force and extent of his paſſion. It is not to be ſuppoſed that he was either a pleaſing or entertaining companion after her departure. He could not ſay a word; and was reduced to the neceſſity of feigning himſelf ill, to excuſe his want of ſpirits. Miſs Hillaſton ſaw through his behaviour and pitied him. At his requeſt ſhe ſat down to her harpſichord in the afternoon, with a view of diverting him: but the tender ſounds were ſo adapted to his feelings, that his eyes overflowed with involuntary tears. Yet they ſoothed him, and reduced his turbid mind to a more tranquil ſtate.

When he retired to reſt he ſlept not, his thoughts were turned only upon the charming, the afflicted Maria. He knew that he ſhould have a chance of ſeeing her again at Mrs. Hillaſton's, and that afforded him ſome comfort: indeed, it was the only one he then had.

In the morning he took his leave of Miſs Hillaſton and her mother, who did not preſs him to ſtay any longer, as they knew he went to meet her ſon. Returning them his thanks for their kindneſs to him, and aſſuring them of his intention and readineſs to ſerve them in every ſhape, he ſet off for Cambridge. The reflection of Maria beguiled the way, and his ſenſes were entirely employed in the contemplation of her charms. Hillaſton came, as he had promiſed, in the week; and preſſing him concerning the ſucceſs of his amour with Miſs Leeſon, Rigby could not forbear making him a confidant, and imparted the whole affair to him.

"Well,"

"Well," ſaid he, "I ſee no reaſon why you "ſhould be dejected about this matter: you have "received no diſagreeable anſwer, though her "treatment may not be ſo favourable as you may "wiſh. I will learn ſome news for you, how mat-"ters ſtand. I ſhall go home, and ſpend a week "there or in the neighbourhood; and my ſiſter, "who keeps up a conſtant correſpondence with "Miſs Leeſon, will inform me if ſhe ſays any thing "about you: beſides, as ſhe made ſo ſhort a ſtay "at our houſe, it is very likely ſhe will return ſoon "again, and and then we will go and ſee her."

"I ſhould be very glad to know that circum-"ſtance," ſaid Rigby; "for I ſhould like to ſee her "once more before I go into Berkſhire, which I "ſhall do as ſoon as theſe two terms are over."

"You ſhall certainly know; and I will go home "with you, if ſhe does not come into this part of "the country."

Rigby aſſured him the propoſal was extremely agreeable to him. He ſpent three or four days with his friend, and then ſet off, to procure him the deſired intelligence. In about a fortnight he returned, and told him what he had learned at home; that Maria did not expect to be at liberty to viſit his ſiſter again that ſummer, as Mrs. Leeſon though ſhe had got the better of her illneſs, was ſtill ſo weak and low, that ſhe required the care and attention of a daughter: that ſhe ſpoke very favourably of him in her letters, and hoped, about the latter end of September, to ſpend at leaſt a month her.

This news gave great pleaſure to Rigby, and made him determine, as ſoon as the vacation commenced, to go to Berkſhire; and accordingly, the two friends ſet out on foot again for farmer Wilkins's where, it is unneceſſary to ſay, they were well received.

Mrs. Wilkins had communicated to her huſband Hillaſton's behaviour to their daughter: and, the firſt opportunity they had, both returned him thanks, and told him, that the Pitman family had broke off with theirs, and they never ſaw the ſon. Rigby had the mortification to find his mother in a bad ſtate of health; and, as it was apprehended, in a decline. He did every thing that natural tenderneſs and affection could ſuggeſt, to amuſe and relieve her.

Among thoſe that were pleaſed at the return of our friends, Hannah Wilkins was not the leaſt. The apparent diſtraction of Hillaſton, his extraordinary behaviour, his diſagreeable countenance, could not prevent the innocent Hannah from being much affected by his generous treatment of her. Gratitude was ſtrongly impreſſed on her heart: and ſhe was aſhamed of herſelf for having a good opinion of ſo worthleſs a being as young Pitman then appeared in her eyes. She ſaw the difference of the behaviour of the two men: and ſhe applauded and reſpected the one, whilſt ſhe condemned and deſpiſed the other. She loved Hillaſton, without knowing it. In his abſence ſhe had often thought of her deliverer, and lamented his lunacy with tears. When ſhe ſaw him return to Berkſhire again which ſhe feared he never would, her little heart was ſwelled with joy, and his attention to her gave her infinite pleaſure: when ſhe perceived that he was ſo much more ſociable and free than he was before, ſhe concluded that he had got rid of his madneſs, and would have the enjoyment of his right ſenſes again; and in that light he appeared ſtill more amiable in her eyes: for poor Hannah, unlike the generality of her ſex, paid more regard to the jewel, which ſuch an ill favoured caſket contained, than to the caſket itſelf.

This was a proof of her ignorance, for there are at leaſt a thouſand females to one of a contrary way

of

of thinking: and a glittering outſide, a ſpecious appearance, ſhall be more valued and regarded than the moſt engaging and amiable qualities which may have the misfortune of wanting perſonal beauty to attach the firſt notice: yet it is moſt probable that Hannah would have enſured herſelf happineſs hy the prudence of her choice, whilſt the others would be as induſtrious in procuring themſelves misfortune. The great reſpect that the whole family had for Hillaſton, prevented their obſerving the particular attention which Hannah ever paid to him and unknown to herſelf. How natural it is for us to endeavour to pleaſe thoſe we love! it is alſo a ſatisfaction to ourſelves to render them all the good offices in our power.

Hannah, whoſe native modeſty would have urged her to receive death almoſt as ſoon as ſuffer a ſuſpicion to have fallen on her virtue by her own miſconduct, was ſtill wading farther into the ſtream, whoſe rapidity was carrying her away without her knowledge.

Rigby in the mean time, did not fail to pay his compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox, who received him very kindly, as did alſo Miſs Bennet.

About a month before he left the country, he happened to go to ſee the latter, on a day that ſhe had appointed to go over to ſtay a little while with her couſin; he therefore begged leave to accompany her, which ſhe with pleaſure complied with, thanking him at the ſame time for his company. As they paſſed through a little village which lay in their road, they found one of the cottages on fire; and it being a dry ſeaſon, the ſtraw, with which it was thatched, blazed moſt furiouſly: the inhabitants of the place, eager to ſave their own houſes from taking fire, and to quench it, were all in confuſion. The horſe that Miſs Bennet rode was young and ſkittiſh. The

flames

flames and the noiſe of the people frightened him. In ſpite of all her efforts, though ſhe was a good rider, he ran away with her. Rigby deſired the ſervant not to follow his miſtreſs too cloſely; and clapping ſpurs to his horſe, cleared the hedge into the field that lay next the road, and ſtruck acroſs two or three more fields that lay between him and a common which he knew the road led to, and cut off a large angle of it. He ſucceeded in his deſign: and Miſs Bennet ſtill keeping her ſeat, though much terrified, he diſengaged his feet from the ſtirrups, and ſhooting acroſs her horſe, ſeized him by the bridle, and threw himſelf off at the ſame inſtant. The ſudden ſhock diſmounted her, and falling into Rigby's arms, (who was on one knee on the earth) ſhe let go her horſe's bridle; and he ran off.

By this time the ſervant came up, and with the greateſt difficulty Miſs Bennet was prevented from fainting. When ſhe had a little recovered herſelf, ſhe returned him many thanks for ſaving her life: for ſhe declared ſhe was ſo giddy from the ſwiftneſs with which ſhe was carried, that ſhe could not have kept her ſeat much longer. They ſent the ſervant after his miſtreſs's horſe, for Rigby's was feeding very quietly by them: he entreated Miſs Bennet to ſit upon his knee, which ſhe refuſed, but pointing to a bank, they retreated to it: however, when Rigby attempted to riſe, he found it was a taſk he could not accompliſh: as he had thrown himſelf from his horſe, his right foot had got into a cart-rut, and his ancle was very much ſprained: with great difficulty he aroſe, and ſupported the yet trembling Lydia to the bank, where ſhe propoſed to reſt herſelf. The tender heart of Miſs Bennet ſuffered more for his misfortune than from the apprehenſions of her own danger, and ſhe lamented it in more moving terms. Rigby intreated her to make

herſelf

herſelf eaſy about it, and complained of its only being ſtiff.

The ſervant, with ſome trouble, caught the runaway horſe, but Lydia would not venture to ride him again; ſhe took her ſervant's, and Rigby was obliged to be helped on his. Very luckily they were not above three miles from Mrs. Wilcox's.

As ſoon as they arrived there he was taken off his horſe, and his boot was cut from his leg, which was much ſwelled and diſcoloured. A ſurgeon was immediately ſent for, and, till he came, Mrs. Watſon applied ſome proper things to allay the ſwelling. They would not ſuffer him to be moved home, but kept him there till his cure was compleated.

In ſome of the converſations he had with Mrs. Wilcox, he learned, that Sir Thomas Crawford had given up his pretenſions to Miſs Bennet, and ſhe was diſengaged again. The young Lady ſat with him very frequently, declaring, as it was upon her account he received the hurt, that ſhe ſhould do all in her power to divert him during his confinement. He had, by this means, an opportunity of contemplating the ſweetneſs of her temper, her amiable manners, and the tenderneſs of her diſpoſition: and his heart had fallen a victim to her charms, had not the idea of the lovely Maria totally engroſſed it;—not that Lydia was inferior to her in beauty, but it was of a different kind.

Mr. Bennet went over to his nephew's while Rigby was yet confined and thanked him in the moſt affectionate manner for his kindneſs to his daughter; telling him, he was indebted to him for his child's life.

The time was now approaching when he hoped to meet his beloved Maria; and the remembrance of her coſt him many a ſigh. Theſe did not paſs unobſerved by Miſs Bennet, who could not help

communicating

communicating her fears to her couſin. When Rigby was reſtored to the uſe of his leg, he went home, after repeating his grateful ſenſe of the favour they had done him in taking ſuch care of him. In a ſhort time after he went away to Cambridge.

This accident ſerved but to encreaſe Miſs Bennet's liking for Rigby: his gallantry and generoſity appeared in the moſt amiable light in her eyes; ſhe loved him, and ſhe hid not her paſſion from her couſin—Thoſe ſighs that had eſcaped him, gave her great uneaſineſs, and though ſhe had no reaſon to imagine that ſhe poſſeſſed his heart, yet ſhe feared that ſome other perſon did. But as he had never even mentioned any lady's name, on whom a ſuſpicion of that kind might fall, they were ſuppoſed to ariſe from the tedioufneſs of his cure. Lydia, nevertheleſs, felt all the pains of an hopeleſs paſſion, which her delicacy and virtue forbade her to reveal.

The END of VOL. I.

30 72 OCT